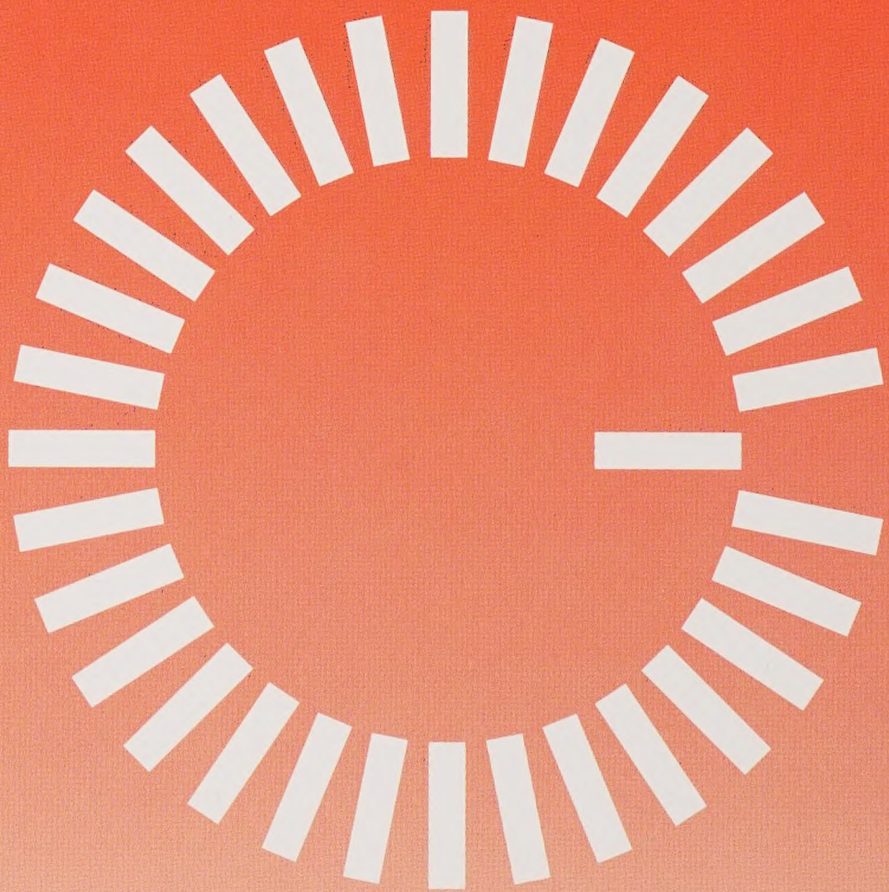
Metalsmith

Summer
1993
Volume 13
Number 3
$7

to

Art



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Contemporary Jewellery: 1964–1993

Selected Works:
Helen Williams Drutt Collection

Arkansas Art Center
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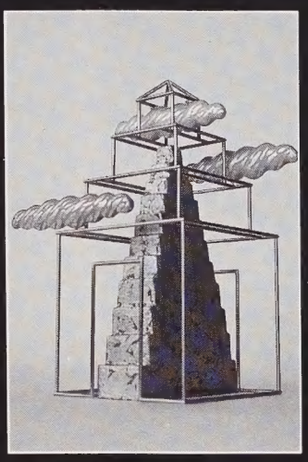
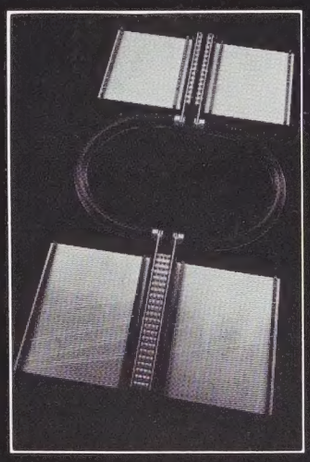


Carlier Makigawa
Object, 1986
Private Collection



Gary S. Griffin
"Collar in Progression Base .1875 and .3125", 1976
Collection: Helen Williams Drutt

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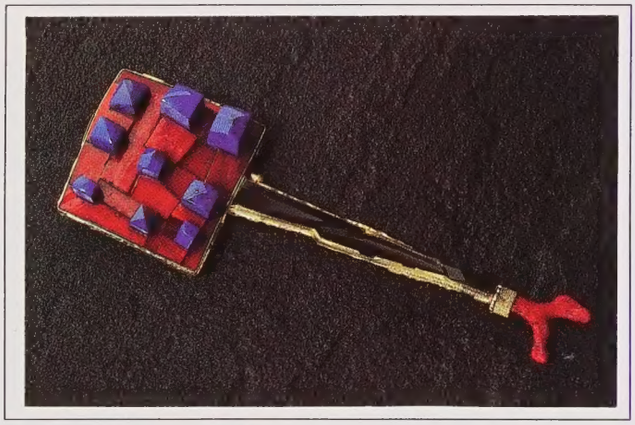

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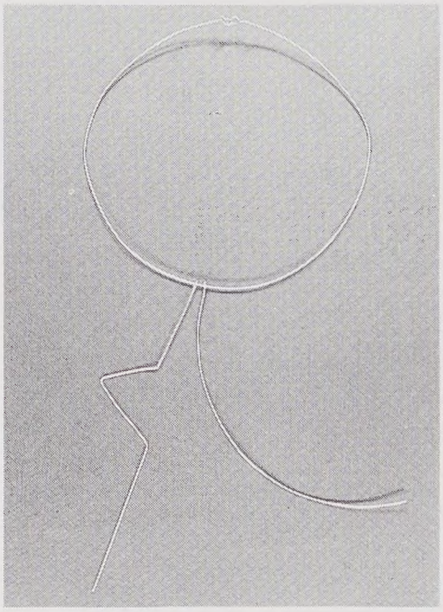

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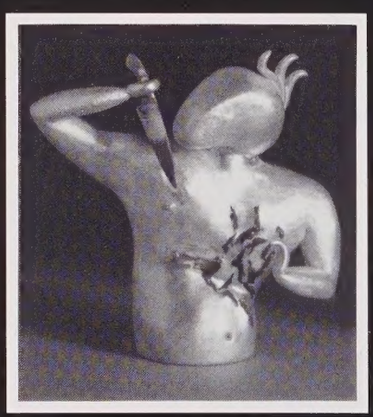

PIN

JULY

KEITH LEWIS

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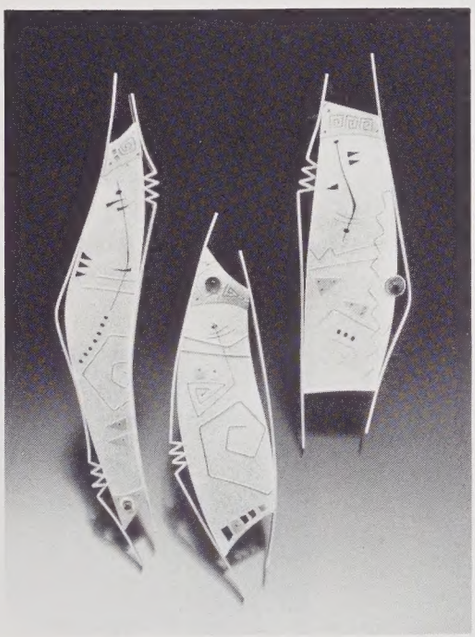

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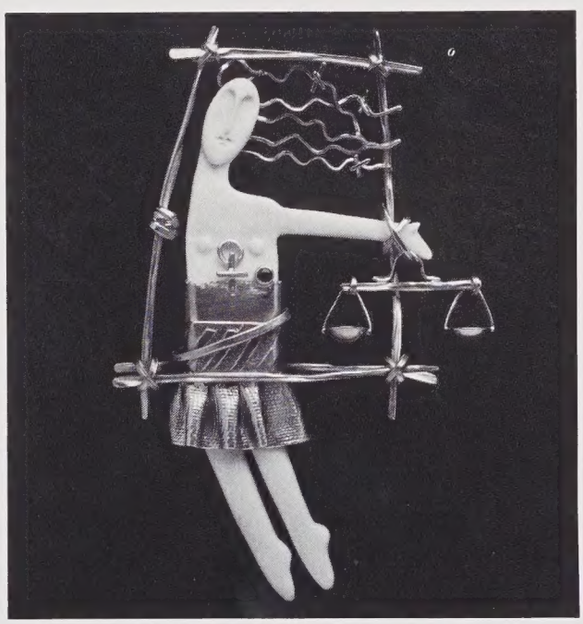

BROOCH: "LIBRA", 18K, SILVER, SAPPHIRE, BONE 3½×2¼

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Metalsmith

THE JOURNAL OF
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Editorial

Cleaning out my study, I found myself throwing out huge piles of magazines, some of them only a month or two old. The copies of *Metalsmith,* and a few other art periodicals, however, demanded to be kept. (One day I may even put them into some sort of order.) When thinking about the difference between those on the trash heap and those still on the shelves, I realized that the contents of many magazines have a relatively short half-life. The information, be it the latest scoop on some celebrity, the hippest look in fashion, or the performance specs on the most recent computer peripheral, has little if any lasting value. Maybe one day a sociologist will be interested in people's fascination with Madonna, but they will not find any helpful archives on my bookshelves. On the other hand, I would like to think that the better art periodicals furnish technical and historical information, intelligent presentation and discussion, and the cultural and aesthetic contextualization that will *always* be of some value.

I admit that I was somewhat taken aback by a few people who upon hearing that I was the editor of *Metalsmith* immediately responded: "Well I sure hope that you cut down on the articles and run more color pictures so that we can get some good ideas." But that response aside, my greatest challenge is to find the writers whose abilities with language assure that the magazine is not only current, but in some aspects timeless. Janet Koplos's ruminations on crafts criticism should be assigned reading not just for writers but for all students of metalsmithing, young and old. (And the fact that you are reading the magazine suggests that you are always a student, hungry for learning and new challenges.) Janet has tackled a thorny and sure to be controversial issue with genuine feelings for the field of crafts. And, she writes with a tough intelligence that I wish could be bottled and administered to writers, (myself included) like vitamins or spring tonic.

The articles on Kiff Slemmons and Lisa Norton both point out how even the most individually creative artists are able to learn from history, whether it is from the vernacular tradition of early industrial metal fabricators, which informs much of Norton's work or the richly discussed and documented works of the surrealists who so influence Kiff Slemmons. On the other hand, Bruce Metcalf points out in his column "Crafts, Money and Fear" the dangers of too much influence or, at least, the dangers of the influence of forms without context; a crime which this very magazine helps to perpetuate through its lavish reproductions.

I like to think that all of our readers use *Metalsmith* as something more than a catalogue of recent styles (the pattern books of the late 20th century as Bruce would say) but I also know that sometimes the magazine is picked up at the newsstand or in a friend's studio and quickly scanned for "who's hot, who's not?" But remember, *Metalsmith* is not meant to be a substitute for studio visits, trips to museums and galleries, nor can it replace the very necessary verbal dialogue between artists, writers, critics, collectors, and even cranks. The written word has its own role in the field, as do the color reproductions (and all of us wish for more of those) and I am particularly pleased that our contributors show the same skill with the written word that the artists included in this issue exhibit through their chosen mediums.

And by the way, if you insist on throwing away your old issues of the magazine, check with your local community library, art center, or schools; one day some budding artist may discover in the history of the field a spark of inspiration or a struggling writer may need a footnote.

F.C.L.

EDITOR'S NOTE

In an effort to service the variety of needs of our readers *Metalsmith* is seeking submissions of articles on technical subjects. Please encourage among your peers the sharing of this information through publication in the pages of *Metalsmith.*

CORRECTION

In the Spring 1993 issue of *Metalsmith* magazine, in the review "METAMORPHOSIS: Convertible Jewelry" the name of the Artium Gallery was incorrectly spelled. Artium Gallery is located at 730 5th Avenue, 17th floor, New York, NY, 10019. The editor regrets any misunderstanding and inconvienence to the owners, artists, and patrons of the gallery. I offer my most sincere apologies for this mistake.

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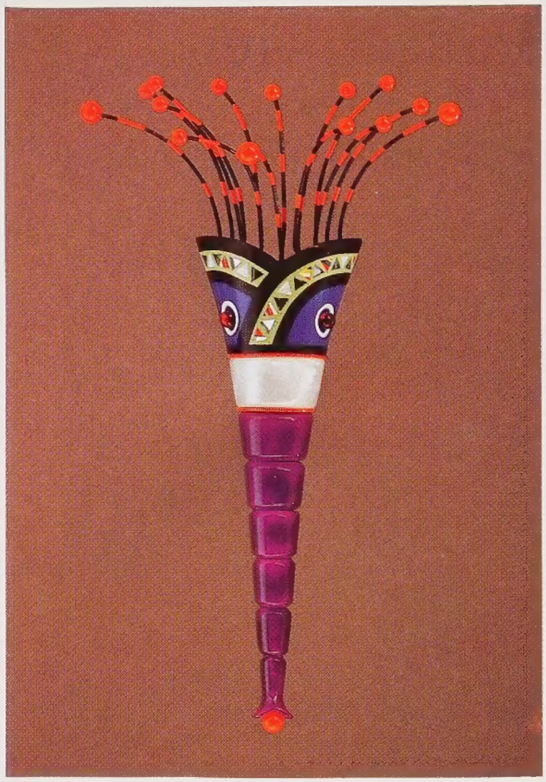

Peter Chang, *Pin*, 1991
acrylic and polyester
6 x 15 x 1½"
Photograph by Jack Ramsdale
Courtesy:
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Photograph by Rod Slemmons
Courtesy: The Artist
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Nose ornament, crayfish
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Courtesy:
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Book Review

by Don Stuart

Metals Technic
A Collection of Techniques for Metalsmiths
Brynmorgen Press, 1992

We all take workshops to learn from a technical specialist. Workshops are usually warm and personal, filled with the character of the teacher – a trait difficult for a book to emulate. *Metals Technic*, however, is a book that becomes very personal. In their own words twelve metalsmiths carefully guide us through their techniques. Each infuses their chapter with their own personality. We feel that we are in the workshop to share their careful methodical approach or to enjoy their energetic enthusiasm. From Heikke Seppä's "I'll call it reticulation from now on" to Tim McCreight's "Jeepers, you made a knife!", we feel we are present in the studio to enjoy and learn.

This is a wonderful notebook of techniques, not a glamorous coffee table book. It is destined to be used at the bench. Careful drawings substantiate the writing to guide us properly through the steps. There are no lavish photographs of finished works. We are neither awed nor influenced by the artistry of completed pieces. We must, therefore, take the technique and create our own – nice!

The book design is superb. My initial reaction was that the illustrations seemed too big and everything was spread out too much. However, this proved to be an asset. The narrow columns, well spaced lines and lots of white space surrounding the text make for easy reading and it may well become a convienient space for one's own notes and reminders. The paper, cover, ink colour and type style are all perfectly and wisely selected. This is elegant, not ostentatious. All together, the book becomes quiet, deliberate teaching.

Today we are so much more aware of health hazards and safety and each chapter carefully, not ominously, addresses these issues. Some like Phillip Fike's "I enlist your common sense and safety consciousness to perpetuate that record!", leave us smirking!

It is difficult, if not impossible for one metalsmith to be an authority on so many specialized techniques; thus, this collaboration is excellent. Tim McCreight's other books have become staple texts for so many. *Metals Technic* will become a perfect and welcome addition.

Don Stuart is a gold/silversmith and professor at Georgian College, Barrie, Ontario, Canada. A Distinguished Member of SNAG, he is also a member of the Board of Directors.

Claire Sanford, *Patination*

Michael Good, *Anticlastic Raising*

Mary Ann Scherr, *The Instant Etch Process*

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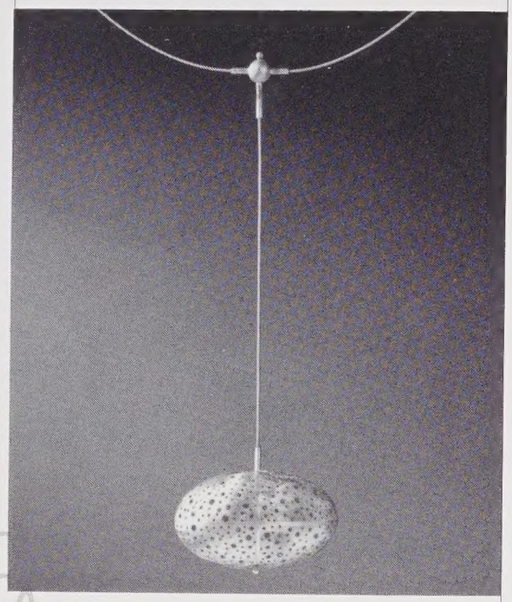

"Egg Pendant", 1992
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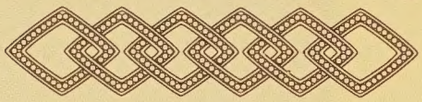

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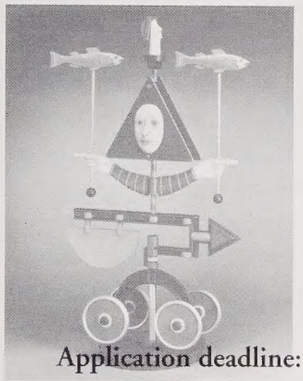

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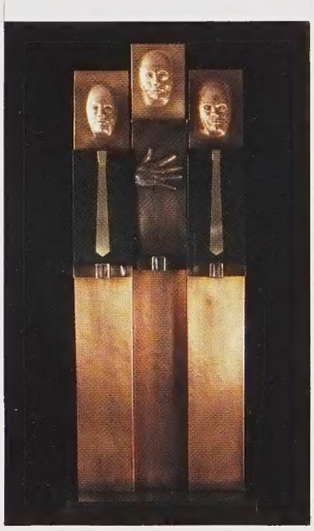

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Recent Sightings

Crafts, Money and Fear

by Bruce Metcalf

It had been a long time since I had seen one of the big ACC crafts fairs. The last time I saw one, there was only one big fair, and it was in Rhinebeck, New York. (Does that date me, or what?) So, when I went to this spring's big fair in Baltimore, I didn't know what to expect. It was supposed to be a cross-section of the best of American production crafts, and with over 1300 exhibitors, it was bigger than I could imagine.

Some of the production jewelers I admire most were there: Ken Loeber; Don Friedlich; and Didi Suydam among them. I saw some very distinctive jewelry too: George Sawyer's edge-grain gold mokume rings; David Urso's vegetable-dyed, cast plastic pendants; Valerie Hector's beaded necklaces; and Cheryl Rydmark's delicate constructions. These were the high points.

The low points were far more numerous. The vast majority of the jewelry at Baltimore was derived from one of several American production jewelers. Let me run down the list of widely imitated looks and their original authors: Simple forged chokers, sometimes with a half-twist in the middle: Ron Pearson. Flat sawn and decorated shapes encrusted with colored gems: Pat Garrett. Long snake-chains with hollow forms with relief patterns: Jan Yager. Neo-primitive wire-and-sheet constructions: Carolyn Morris Bach. Gold granulation in symmetrical forms with occasional gems: Robert Kulike and Jean Reist Stark. Robert Lee Morris forms in earrings and chains. The "primary images" of Sandra Enterline, Didi Suydam, and Lisa Gralnick are starting to crop up, as are Barbara Heinrich's polished edges on leaf-like chains. Small squiggles, square & round spirals, dots & dashes, and layers upon layers of flat anodized metal also proliferated.

There were some cases of bald-faced, outright theft. Most of the enameled jewelry looked a whole lot like Colette had done them. One booth featured cast spoons from plastic flatware, model parts, and figures, like Fred Woell's work, but without the pointed satire. Another booth prominently displayed several Jan Yager rip-offs. Significantly, none of the imitations had the depth or subtlety of the originals.

Still, I was amazed. The costume-jewelry trade has a reputation for being totally unscrupulous, willing to knock off any design that appears salable. Well, the same thing is rife in the hand crafted jewelry biz, too. Originality and integrity seem to be in short supply out there.

Later, I got to thinking. Craft has been a self-conscious pursuit for several centuries now. By the end of the 16th century, pattern-books were commonplace. These were books of engravings of the latest styles in architecture, furniture, silverwork, and other luxury crafts that issued from the capitals of Europe, to be disseminated in the provinces and colonies. In Moscow or New York artisans could get the latest fashions from Paris or London, and imitate them to the best of their abilities. The wealthiest clients could insist on exact copies, but more often the provincial craftsman modified designs to suit the frequently modest budgets and conservative tastes of his audience. Numerous styles and dozens of short-lived revivals emerged from the fashion centers, to be copied, mixed, and matched out in the sticks. The history of craft is largely a story of shameless copy-work and unattributed imitation.

Originators of stylistic inventions were also the authors of pattern-books, so they profited from disseminating their designs. The pattern-book was clearly intended to stimulate imitation. In addition, the inventors of new styles were usually busy servicing one urban market, and they weren't necessarily interested in the provinces. Lastly, the process of engraving illustrations for books took years of work, and designs sometimes took decades to reach remote and conservative markets. The present situation is different in several ways. Nowadays, the equivalents of the pattern-books are craft magazines, books, and catalogues, as well as the craft fairs themselves. The dissemination of information is international and almost instantaneous, so design innovators are no longer protected by a structural time lag. A competitor can see what an artist is doing the moment it is introduced and they can be producing knock-offs in a matter of weeks.

History also demonstrates that the marketplace is deeply ambivalent about innovation. Sometimes design classics are accepted quickly, like the famous Breuer B32 tubular steel chair, which is still manufactured today. But the typical experience of innovators can be illustrated by artists like Jan Yager, who operated on a shoestring for a number of years before her "pillow" forms and necklaces with pebbles were successful. Most design inventions face a period of public resistance, while the new idea gradually looses its strangeness. Meanwhile, the designer has to "pay some dues" in the form of a reduced income, or else she must rely on a line of more familiar designs to pay her bills.

And, of course, by the time Jan Yager's designs took off, any number of people had already started to rip her off. Lesser talents recognized that there was money to be made, and, not wanting to go through periods of trial-and-error development and waiting for market acceptance, they took the easy way out. Since the marketplace puts little premium on origination, Yager's coattails afforded a free ride for quite a few jewelers.

It's really a matter of fear: fear of failure; fear of risk; fear of not getting a comfortable bottom line. Those who are unwilling to develop their own designs believe that the safest alternative is to copy. They hope to profit from their predecessor's success, while minimizing their own risk. Finally, the irony is that the most durable successes in the crafts's marketplace are enjoyed by those who consistently offer a recognizable difference from the crowd. The best buyers, and the higher price-points, go to those who separate themselves from the herd by refusing to imitate anyone else, and by producing designs that are difficult to steal. The knock-off artists turn from one theft to another, and never develop their own "signature style". In the end, they relegate themselves to the lower tiers of the marketplace, and remain stuck there. Imitation is its own punishment.

Still, I'm saddened by the loss of idealism that such relentless theft represents. In the '50s and '60s, one of the main attractions of the life devoted to handcraft was its apparent integrity. One could make a modest living without kissing the butt of corporate America, or being forced to live near a city, or compromising one's sense of individuality. The craft life stood for nonconformity. It also stood for a rejection of the fear that comes from the slavish desire to be acceptable. But now there's big money to be made. Things sure have changed.

Bruce Metcalf actually worked for a production jewelry studio once. He now works strictly one-of-a-kind in Philadelphia.

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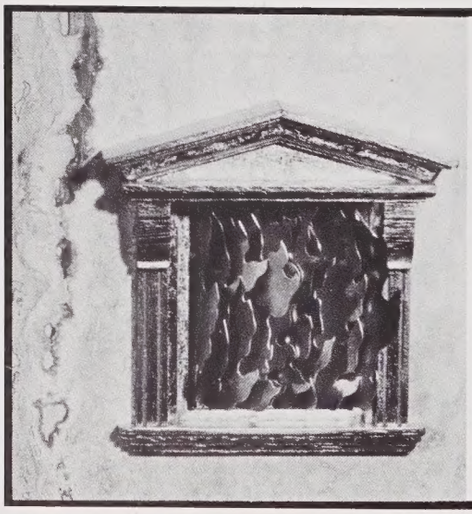

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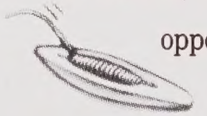

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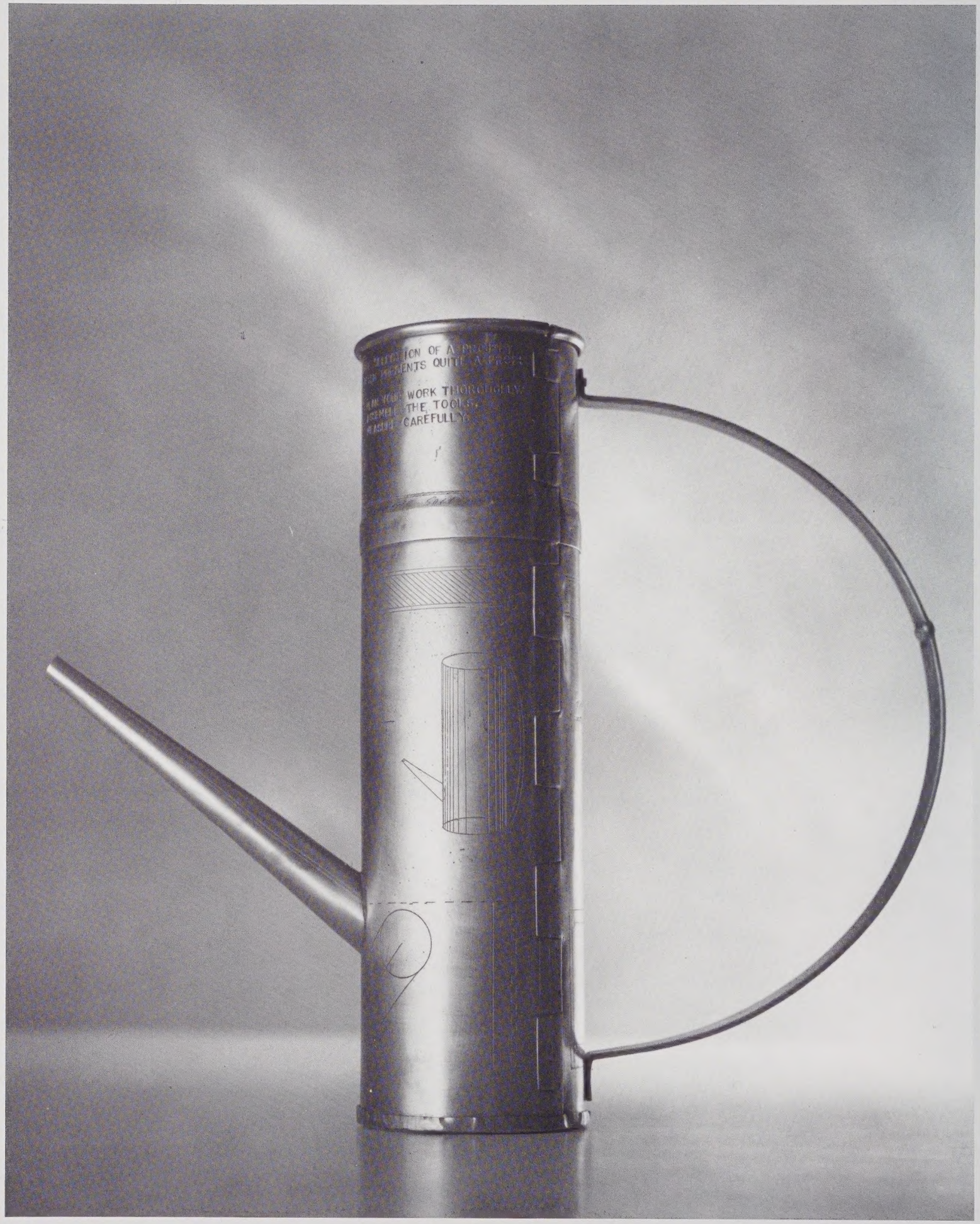
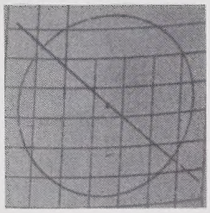

WORK THOROUGHLY
THE TOOLS
CAREFULLY

Lisa Norton



Objects for Inscribing a Vernacular History

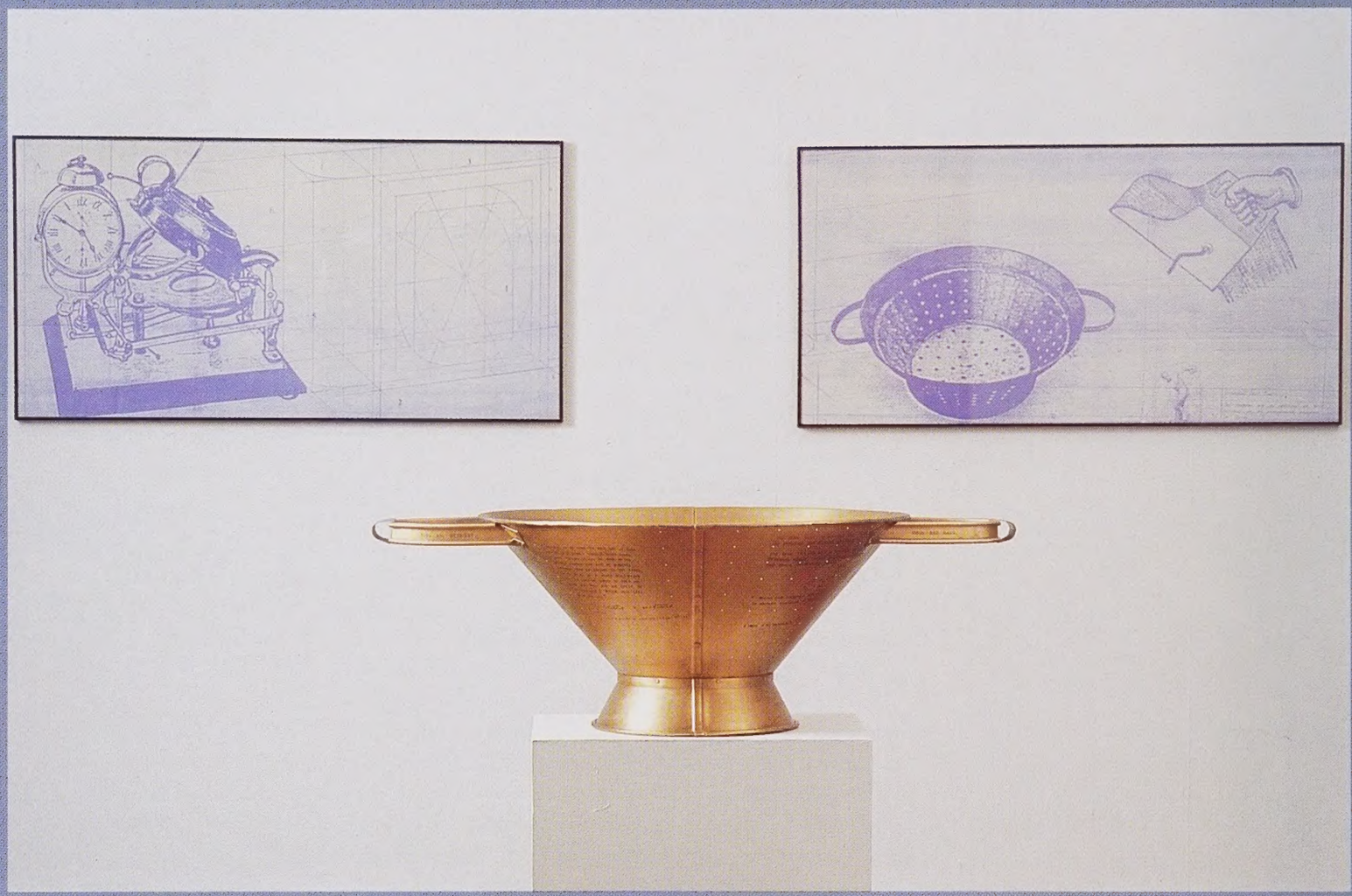
by Michal Ann Carley

While Lisa Norton's works give evidence of her interest in the concepts of value, utility, function, form and the cultural conditions in which they were constructed, her points of departure remain rooted in process. Through various techniques she examines both her own personal history in metalsmithing, and the history of metalsmithing as a conduit of material and social culture. While studying at the Cleveland Institute of Art and in graduate school at the Cranbrook Academy of Art, the artist investigated the relationship of the processes of craft production to the function and meaning of craft objects. These investigations led to an interest in the ways by which our culture assigns value to an artifact. In her work, Norton poses questions regarding an object's artistic value as well as its value as a commodity; its intrinsic human value; and its value as a sign of human ethics. She considers the very concept of "utility" as both a function and as an attribute of culture. And in all of her work she addresses craft and technique as processes which have often been thought of as irrelevant to the meanings (outside of pure aesthetic considerations) that we assign to artifacts.

In the last several decades artists, critics, and theorists have rebuked concepts of *originality, uniqueness,* and *authorship* as the constructions of an antiquated, patriarchal, modernist agenda. Artists particularly have assumed postures that challenge those previously accepted dictums of creation and the myth of the *artist as genius*. The hand of the artist: the trace and the mark that recorded their interaction with the medium, once the source of national pride and curatorial reverence, is now often perceived as a misbegotten hubris. These allegedly timeless aspects of art cannot acknowledge the aspects and vagaries of class, gender, behavior and utility that are dissimilar, subtle, and even at times banal, but which reflect material and cultural conditions, never-the-less.

Out of these concerns Norton produced a series of works that resemble Early American utilitarian objects such as water pitchers, oil cans and jugs which, when exaggerated and enlarged, appear almost iconic in their simplification. By removing the object from the realm of practical utility and personal function, the artist provokes the viewer to question: "What human needs does this object satisfy that are cultural, psychological, political?"; thus acknowledging the values that objects serve apart from their physical function. For instance, as cultural signifiers the objects may represent the values of American ingenuity and practicality, or conversely, the values of a private and personal domestic necessity.

Ornamental Sheet Metal Object, 1986
bronze, 13½ x 14 x 4"



Norton's meticulously crafted "common place" objects include *Useful Project with Sentimental Appeal, Attractive Project with Conventional Wisdom,* and *Devise for Separating Lies from the Truth.* They were created using traditional, direct sheet metal techniques, which assert the physical processes of making by revealing the lapping, folding, riveting, and soldering of the metal. A vernacular water jug or oil can is seldom considered an object of art; although, they are traditionally viewed as tools of labor and artifacts of low culture. Their utilitarian value is usually defined by the technical and physical requirements of their function, form, size, material, and construction. Norton enlists a form of parody by presenting basic, everyday objects whose associative value to the viewer is more direct, unassuming, and less contrived than conventional works of art. They also function as a nostalgic artifact, and an object presumed to have been used by human hands for a personal function. The viewer's immediate response to the object in an exhibition is to assess their assumptions about the role of an object of art, an object of utility, and both the maker and the user of those objects.

By quoting processes of the Industrial Revolution that have an aura of pragmatism and rigor, the work avoids a connotation that is rooted in romantic nostalgia, and while the shapes resemble those from the past, they are squeaky clean and new in appearance, refusing to be simply a patinaed artifact; thus not yielding to our preconceived *knowledge* of the object's utility or value as an antique or collectable. By revealing its construction, (handmade, but somewhat anonymous in technique) a new history is created, paradoxically acknowledging, in the late 20th century, the hand of a specific maker, and the artist's relationship to the anonymous craftspersons who were overworked, underpaid, and unacknowledged during the early Industrial Revolution.

Like many artists, Lisa Norton develops a work conceptually by initially making preliminary sketches, and then she proceeds to constructed paper and cardboard maquettes. The early stages necessarily involve the artist's ingenuity, spontaneity, design skills, and inventiveness. However, the artist feels her interest and passion for the work wanes when it passes into the stage of precise craftsmanship. She states "the metalsmithing processes themselves often became an alibi for not thinking about what exactly is being created. The laborious aspect of metalworking is half tedium and half myth."

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Studying Lost Time, 1987
bronze, 15 x 31 x 45"
blueprint, 24 x 92"

Out of this conflict Norton recognized that not only did she tire of the tedious metalworking processes which tended to make the technique invisible and flawless, but that the audience was not always challenged to consider the range of values that a work contains, having been coddled into a state of aesthetic and technical appreciation. The artist strove to eliminate the consideration of design and inventiveness, at least superficially, by selecting generic, utilitarian forms and etching and/or embossing a diagram of their construction plan into the sheet metal before the piece was cut and fabricated.

Over and into the diagram she inscribed a series of aphorisms which quote a variety of anonymous, yet, familiar-sounding sources. The words speak from two distinctly different points of reference, which are revealed not only by the style of the language but also by the style in which they were written into the metal. As an example, *Cheap Project with Heroic Appeal,* 1986, is a tin and steel water pitcher whose exaggerated stature of 20 x 18" aggrandizes and mocks function as a paradigm for industriousness and pragmatism. Phrases such as "IN THE ENVIRONMENT OF SERIOUS LIVING THERE IS LITTLE ROOM FOR THE NOVELTY OF TEMPORARY APPEAL" and "A STRAIGHTFORWARD JOB" are stamped into the metal, letter by letter. Another voice, subtlety and non-authoritatively pondering the nature of design and technique, has been etched in a handwritten text. The texts not only intellectually challenge both the utility and the context of the work, but the specific act of reading them puts many viewers in an awkward place where, through the vehicle of cognition and interpretation, they are forced to engage with the piece. This series of works, through its focus on utility in relation to human value and inventiveness and the introduction of multiple *authorities* through disparate voices both diagrams the making of the piece and foregrounds and textualizes the process of assigning meaning and value.

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Pray for Rain, 1989
copper, steel, 41 x 55 x 55½"
blueprint, 48 x 78"

Lisa Norton wants to find a worldly corollary rather than an academic one for her art form. She references not only anonymous makers but also anonymous designers, refusing to only draw authority from an elite world of art historical quotation. The work *Studying Lost Time* sculpturally depicts a food strainer made hyperbolic by its size, pristine finish and repetitious, linear rows of holes. In this work the diagrammatic element is rendered as in an instructional manual, displayed heraldically around the strainer on two wall-mounted blueprints, which illustrate the physical characteristics and dimensions of the colander, its practical function, and an old fashioned line drawing of a time piece. The bronze sieve is replete with texts that speak of time; however, it is entirely unclear as to which conceptions of time the voices are referring. Clearly the voice of the Industrial Revolution speaks to efficiency, expediency and production as an authority in punctuated blasts: "THE ANTIDOTE IS USEFUL OCCUPATION", or " 'LOST TIME'...OCCURS WHILE WAITING FOR SOMETHING TO HAPPEN". Others phrases express a more human element apart from simply one's labor, yet the phrases still have the tenor of wives tales, substituting hollow clichés for genuine reflection.

It is not uncommon for text in various forms to play a prominent role in works of contemporary art. Yet, among many, there is still a prejudice against text because it takes the work out of the realm of the mystical, physically pure aesthetic which both maintains art's exclusivity and *special* status and keeps it as the product of the Modernist, self-referential genius. Text undermines the purely aesthetic system, demanding that the audience engage and analyze their well-known coded structures of a formal visual language (aesthetics and symbols) and written language(s). The use of words provokes an interpretation that is complex, contradictory and confusing. In Norton's hands it functions to assert what is arbitrary, perhaps banal, and the artist relies on a faith in her audience to challenge absolutes and linear didacticism.

The artist imbeds the words into some of her pieces by rigorously pounding them into the metal, uniting her technical dexterity and finesse and her body to create the work. Ironically, the artist states that she is personally uninvested in the phrases. She claims to select impartially, remaining only an observer, and not wishing to produce a specific meaning or reveal a hidden agenda. Rather, she finds the "words and phrases [which she calls 'sing/songy' and 'useless prattle'] appealing ...because they illustrate conflicts."

This distancing is perceived by the viewer in the punning rhythm of the phrasing, and the bi-polar voices that sometimes emerge, neither one pontificating too much. Though, to this writer, it is precisely Norton's clever manipulation and juxtaposition of the visual illustrations, the insidious texts and the meticulously produced utilitarian objects that challenge the encoding or re-encoding of assumptions about industrialized, depersonalized culture. While the quotations sound familiar, suggesting an authoritative source, the artist remains coy and unrelenting in her refusal to authenticate her chosen sound-bites. This refusal never allows the viewer to identify a point of view or secure a resolution.

Pray for Rain, 1989 displays an enormous copper umbrella which lies on the ground in front of a wall-mounted, montaged blueprint. As in the other multiple pieced works, a polyphonous dialogue occurs between the separate elements, producing neither an interpretation nor a translation, but a rich resonance. The viewer immediately relates associatively to the object, regarding it as a valuable tool used to protect one from the elements of sun and rain, for leisure and golf outings. Yet it becomes a hothouse hybrid of a once useful object. Because of its size and material, it is ineffectual for any utilitarian function.

On the wall is a reproduction in blueprint from the 19th century French painting *Paris on a Rainy Day* by Gustave Caillebotte. The image shows a bourgeois couple strolling under two plumped parasols. It is counterbalanced by an ominous, yet comic, satellite dish antennae on the left panel. The image of laissez fare comfort turns the umbrella into an emblem of success and profitability, which is visually and symbolically reiterated by a satellite which carries and transmits the waves of commerce to an industrial society. The artist's use of the blueprint medium borrows from architectural blueprints which control, determine and codify structures and their decoration, embellishment, and ornament.

ACQUIRED
SOLD

Torso of a Young Man, 1990
bronze, 54 x 35 x 16"

Product with the Influence of Custom, 1991
sterling silver, 13½ x 14 x 4"

Conspicuously, the umbrellas pictured also physically serve their users. Consideration of the utilitarian value of an object is generally delineated by its specific function, but here the audience must recognize that the concept of function is expanded by the desires, aspirations and the possibilities of the user. Regarding these objects, Norton suggested: "It is functional like a pot because you still want something from it."

Here again, the metal object is constructed with workman-like techniques, utilizing riveting, folding and soldering. The broadly reflective surfaces are articulated with phrases that reference the umbrella's protective potential as shield, social armor, lightening rod, covering for rain and conductivity. The words also speak from a certain position of paranoia, capitulating to fearful obsessions: "HAVE YOU EVER FELT THAT SOMEONE WAS WATCHING YOU EVEN THOUGH NO ONE WAS PRESENT?", "FEARS OF EVERY VARIETY CAN BE FOUND AMONG US."

These rhetorical phrases might sound to the mind like banter; however, their repetitious utterance has a cumulative effect. The voices can be attributed to essentially two different points of reference yet the historical contexts are not clear. Norton states: "The objective voice often takes the form of a rigid paragraph or sentence. It represents the didactic element in learned canons and codes of behavior and belief. It is a series of assumptions based on tradition and widely held 'truisms' which form the foundation of a society's definition of utility. It can be read as a male voice of authority in a gender dominated culture." "THIS IS DANGEROUS NONSENSE", "RIDE ALONE ON A BICYCLE BUILT FOR ONE" are warnings and ruminations that begin to sound like the phrases printed in daily devotionals for the pious who want uplift and guidance. On the other hand, the voice of the individual who occasionally speaks in the text sounds like the subjective, feminine nature in us all. It serves to jog viewers/readers into a sense of recognition, imparting a critical distance of realism upon the clichés, and functioning through forms of personal observations, opinion, subjective accounts, the incidental and the momentary.

Pray for Rain operates in a cultural moment that does not promote an individual, personal vision; in the way that Caillebotte's society promoted the successes of 19th century positivism and materialism. However the work attempts to negotiate its epoch's prohibitions while recognizing both our distance from and dependence on past belief systems.

Historically, fine metalsmithing has employed meticulous, pristine craftsmanship. The artist has remarked that traditional training in metalsmithing would proceed from the successful cutting of several metal forms, to placing them together, then flowing the solder to merge the metals flawlessly into a visually seamless, pure marriage; and effacing any trace of the connection. To counteract these conventions, Norton regularly uses alternative technologies, such as sheet metal work, a workman-like or a male language, found in heating and air-conditioning ductwork to communicate her ideas. Riveting and folding indicates a kind of pragmatism or obviousness in the way in which things are put together. For Norton this is in distinct opposition to practices such as those found in Danish silversmithing where the work is seamless, aerodynamic and flawless, acknowledging the conception of the designer, but hiding the hand of the maker.

Made by the techniques found in ductwork, *Torso of a Young Man,* 1990, in elevator bronze, transforms a Y-joint, which is a transition duct, into a modern monumental, Brancusi-like torso shape. Here, once again, Norton asserts a re-consideration of utility, human worth, physical, psychological and philosophical value. All the while, a tongue is planted in the artist's cheek because the viewer's reading of a vessel form is that it traditionally references a woman – a pun on modernism, a pun on text, a pun on surface decoration in general, and a twist on the belief of language being based in authority and male power. Paradoxically, Norton, in her use of these male techniques, pays tribute to the sheet metal workers in Cleveland, whom she befriended. These men, who have gone unheralded, are consummate craftsman, but neither their media nor their names have been enshrined.

THINGS.
COMES FROM THE WOR
SOMETHING ABOUT
AND OTHER SUBJECTS.
WHY THINGS ARE
CERTAIN WAY.
1
A
2
B
C
D
TOP
SIDE

Sheet Metal Project, 1986
bronze, 8 x 11 x 22"

Recently the artist has consciously pared down her use of text because she considers it to have become ubiquitous in the art world. The last mentioned series referenced past and received knowledge without using text, refusing to mediate the dialogue with the viewer with the heavy handed authority of words. However, the artist has once again begun to use text, though now she is more restrained in her strategies.

Product with the Influence of Custom, 1991 is a trophy constructed from sterling silver, replicating the somewhat flattened and sandblasted form of the Visible Man, (an educational model of the body and its internal organs from the '60s). He stands on a partial globe as his foundation, wryly inverting the mythic story of Hercules's trials and Atlas's labor. Around the base are inscribed pedagogical and prescriptive remarks about the finished product and its exchange value as a commodity. On the head of the man is a sterling, chambered Nautilus: a decorative symbol used commonly in 16th century metalwork to illustrate the creativity, design skill and technical virtuosity of the maker. Stamped into this shell are the words "ACQUIRED · SOLD" which underscore the reduction of much metalwork to its value as a commodity, based on the market value of the precious materials used. Additionally, the words echo society's vested interest in rewarding particular definitions of human worth and achievement.

The artist, aware of her visceral pleasure in working the silver, was also ambivalent about using such a precious material as: "using silver in the gallery world brackets oneself into a relation based predominately on exchange value, and the dictates of wealthy collectors." This personal conflict, shared by many metalsmiths, informed the conception of *Product with the Influence of Custom.* Norton's deliberate and unabashed use of sand-blasting sterling silver to reveal the internal human guts of the trophy/man, however contrived and idealistic they appear, subverts both our historical and contemporary reverence for only that which is mannered, expensive and appears to achieve excellence. The selected texts allow the artist to "beat around the bush" and be purposefully oblique with language; effectively reinforcing and contradicting both our own assumptions, and the form (trophy) of the work itself.

Throughout Lisa Norton's career as a metalsmith one is able to perceive a deliberate denial of much of the sensual pleasure that can be gained through working with particular materials. Instead, the artist is acutely aware of the history of technique and production, the anonymous makers as well as the users and how these histories ascribe value to both art and vernacular objects. She deliberately designs her works to demand techniques that are physically difficult. Yet while her work is large scale, she manipulates her craft with precision, however arduous that process may be. In fact, in discussions she often sounds like an athlete seeking the challenge of a new personal record with little desire for public gain or recognition.

Books on the history of fine arts frequently tell us that there is a singular, hegemonic lineage of descent of artistic knowledge and development. (Fortunately, many are currently challenging this conception.) Yet, it is already generally accepted that the decorative arts contain many histories, and, in fact, many now realize that the crafts or the making of useful things, offers a complex record regarding cultural identity and social constructions. In a Postmodern age, Norton acknowledges that we have become unmoored, having lost track of our culture or, at least, our presumed cultures. However, she is not interested in exploiting this alienation to advance a cultural critique. Rather, Norton attempts to set a stage where the audience can examine and re-learn their knowledge (and perhaps misconceptions) of past personal, social, and artistic histories, histories which remain as the evidence of cultural production and invention.

Michal Ann Carley is an artist, writer and curator living in Milwaukee, Wisconsin.
Her most recent publication was *Narratives of Loss: the displaced body.*

Uncommon Means of Measure

THE JEWELRY OF KIFF SLEMMONS

BY MIJA RIEDEL

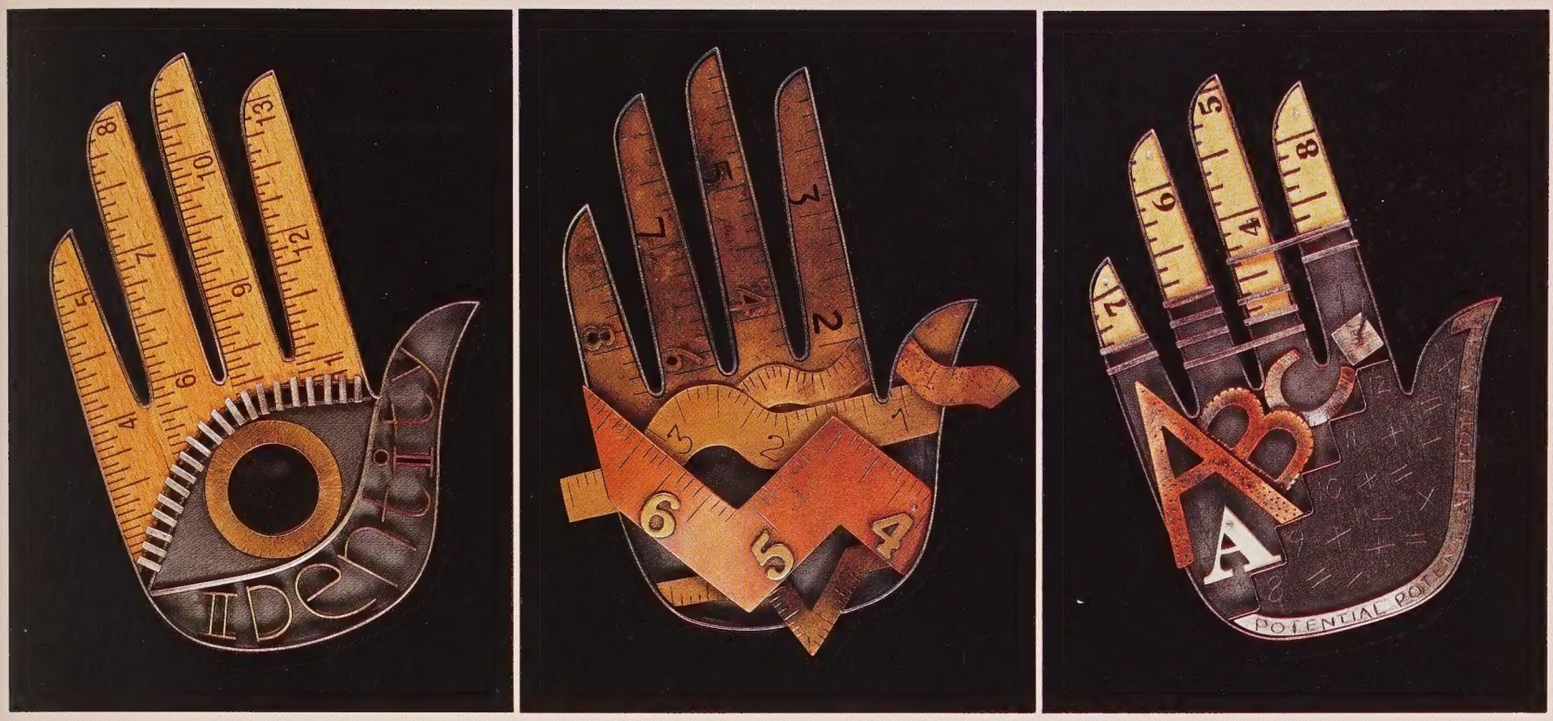
Kiff Slemmons's jewelry is created as much for the mind as for the body. Drawing on the intellectual and literary traditions of surrealists such as Marcel Duchamp, Rene Magritte and Man Ray, Kiff creates multiple layers of meaning in her poetic compositions by taking the commonplace out of context and elaborating on its metaphorical significance. The emphasis is on content and expression rather than decoration or formal, abstract concerns. In the tradition of contemporary metalsmiths like Ramona Solberg, Ron Ho and Robert Ebendorf, much of Kiff's work involves the thoughtful relocation of found objects which, by their very presence, reference something beside the piece of jewelry at hand. The images she creates are inseparable from the wide-range of non-precious materials with which she chooses to work. The results reveal the wide travels, and scholarly, reflective temperament of Kiff Slemmons herself.

Kiff was born in a small town in Iowa. As a girl she liked "playing baseball *and* wearing dresses, often at the same time" – an early indication of her natural predilection towards contrast and contradiction. She listened to *Peter and the Wolf* incessantly – "it must have been the only record in the house" – and later, to Stravinsky and Bartok.

Her mother was a pharmacist; the shelf-lined room where she mixed medicines was full of delicate tools and old scales. Her father, the editor and publisher of the town newspaper, was never without a pencil stub and a small steel make-up rule. As a child, Kiff often worked at the newspaper doing odd jobs, surrounded by the physical mechanisms and speculative dispositions responsible for the orderly dissemination of information and ideas. "I loved everything about the place – the presses, the smell of ink, the feel of the paper, the intricate plates of type with the words upside down and backwards. The Linotype machine was of special interest – a real contraption where hot metal was turned into type."

Those experiences left Kiff with a unforgettable love of language in general, and the printed word in particular. Puns, slogans, clichés, word associations and expressions intrigued her as animated alternatives for communicating elusive ideas. In 1962 she enrolled at Scripps College in Claremont, California, planning to major in Comparative Literature, but shortly thereafter she left for The Sorbonne in Paris. The following fall she enrolled at the University of Iowa to study art and French.

Kiff credits the Linotype machine in her father's workplace as being the catalyst which expanded her career to include metalsmithing; the old printing press was her first recollection of language and ideas made manifest through metal. By the time she graduated *summa cum laude* and Phi Beta Kappa, from the University of Iowa in 1968, with a B.A. in art and French, she had already made one hundred pairs of earrings from two spools of brass wire. These she promptly sold in order to finance a trip to Mexico. This affinity for both jewelry and travel has remained with her as she has matured and attained success.



LEFT TO RIGHT

Self, 1991
silver, brass, ruler, mirror

Friends, 1991
silver, brass, copper

School, 1991
silver, copper, slate, ruler

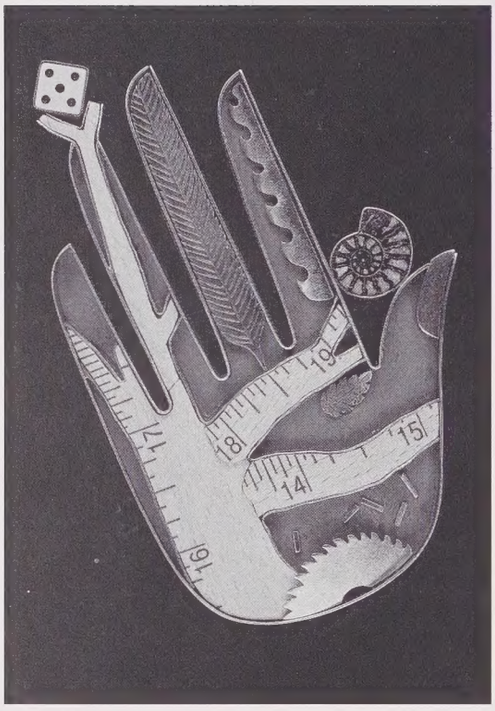
All photographs by Rod Slemmons
Courtesy: The Artist

In the mid-seventies, in an effort to engage her intellect more actively in the metalsmithing process, Kiff banished the notion of purely decorative ornamentation and began making jewelry incorporating more of herself and her literary interests into her work. Some of these early pieces were commemorative shrines she made to house found objects or to honor close friends and family. Familiar and exotic materials, including antique dominos, pre-Columbian spindle whirls and Roman glass beads, were enshrined in an intimate format celebrating both their physical and metaphorical qualities. These commemorative pieces were especially significant for four reasons: they allowed Kiff's intellect and her emotions to affect her jewelry; through these pieces, she was able to establish a rapport between imagery and materials; embody large ideas in small spaces; and address the paradox of monuments which were grand in concept though not in scale.

Inspired by literature, music, Russian constructivism, surrealism, extensive study of the global history of jewelry and extended travels through Europe, the Far East, Scandinavia and Mexico, her technical skills developed as her ideas evolved. A self-taught jeweler, Kiff was interested primarily in concepts, not structured, academic experimentation. As a result, there is nothing superfluous in her sense of design, no empty exhibition of technical virtuosity. Her work has more in common with the expressive forms of adornment made by non-industrialized cultures than the formal, abstract inclination of conventional Western ornamentation; this is manifest in her own work by her choice of materials and the poetic effect of her compositions.

Materials which are inseparable from meaning figure prominently in much of the jewelry in non-industrialized civilizations and the specific significance different cultures find in certain materials has long been of interest to her. To the Maya, jade was a sign of fertility, a symbol of water and the cyclical nature of life; in Benin, coral protects the fertility of the land and is washed in blood each year to renew its strength; only Hawaiian royalty were permitted to wear the Lei Niho Palaoa pendant carved from whale ivory and strung on a fat, woven strand of human hair made from dozens of tiny braids. An element's significance, ranging from subtle to overt, is inseparable from the piece of jewelry it becomes. In the words of Man Ray, one of Kiff's surrealist mentors, "the object becomes the idea." The communicative potential of objects infused with meaning added a level of depth to jewelry making which Kiff found to be imperative.

In his 1923 assemblage, *From What to Write a Poem,* Man Ray wove a quill through the materials the pen was meant to write on, making the poem and the materials one, uniting idea with object until the materials became the message. Kiff, similarly, began to make jewelry from objects which, by their very essence, would mirror the content of each piece. Using the materials to the effect of poetry rather than statement or pure aesthetics, Kiff began to invoke illusion, wit and metaphor in her work.



One of her earliest neckpieces, *Breaking the Ice* is based on her recollection of the long winters in Iowa. When it was too cold to go out thoughts turned inward and letter writing was a frequent pastime. Made from a giant silver pen nib and an assortment of stamps laminated between multiple layers of semi-transparent plexiglass which look like pieces of ice, the materials mirror Kiff's memories of the contemplative nature of winter life and portend the poetic evolution of her work. The piece is reminiscent of the poems of Emily Dickinson, whose way of using words and language Kiff admires greatly.

> "The actual, individual word has whole worlds for Dickinson. A lot of what happens is between words in her poetry, and some of my feelings about what I'm trying to do are like that – like bending a note in blues or in jazz, playing a note that is somewhere in between two notes."

Kiff builds intimations and inferences into her work by designing it to be understandable on a variety of levels; these layers of meaning also satisfy her desire to create visually intriguing jewelry which is conceptually accessible to a wide audience. Her compositions embody the subtle, deep, interconnected spirit that accompanies gradual, tiered systems of building. In this sense, Kiff's approach is not unlike that of the novelist Lawrence Durrell, who planned the first sentence of each paragraph to be understood by everyone who read it and explored more complex, elusive thoughts in the lines which followed, repeating the same process at the start of each paragraph.

During a trip to Japan in 1983, Kiff studied the aesthetic and poetic possibilities of layering which permeate so many aspects of Japanese life, from temple architecture to kimono design. She was especially intrigued by the unlikely sense of depth this process lent to foreshortened Shinto shrines – a discovery with abundant potential for a jeweler. Kiff made a number of brooches exploring the architectural and spiritual essence of temples, and tall, eloquent Torii archways which the Japanese built on both land and sea, as monuments, portals, and frames for sacred spaces.

During this eight week trip, Kiff also developed a strong affinity for pebbles – the one material, beside silver, which appears continually in her jewelry. Stones were scattered around the Torii gates and balanced precariously on their lintels – tossed into the air by religious disciples who hoped the rocks would land on the crowning horizontal beam and stay there – leaving the particular devotee in better karmic shape than s\he had been before.

Kiff's collection of shrine and gate brooches marked the first time she had worked purposefully in series, a methodology favored by numerous contemporary artists and one which would come to characterize much of her later work.

> "I was interested in looking at things in more depth and from different angles, and I did this literally by making a number of pieces. Later, this changed a bit in my way of thinking – until I was actually creating a number of pieces for a specific show that would all be exhibited together – almost as though they were all one piece."

Nearly every piece Kiff has made in the past fifteen years has included small beach stones and oxidized sterling silver. The other materials she uses are chosen from a plethora of non-precious materials and are dependent on the content of the piece. In the manner of metalsmiths such as Ramona Solberg and Robert Ebendorf, she favors materials not frequently found in Western jewelry – walrus whiskers, zippers, rulers, pottery shards and, before ivory was exploited to disastrous effect, pieces of mastodon tusk. By incorporating diverse, unlikely materials into her jewelry, Kiff began the transformative process which has become a cornerstone for her work; metamorphosing the recognizable into something completely different by elevating it from the commonplace and juxtaposing it with thoughtfully chosen, metaphorically loaded images.

ABOVE LEFT AND RIGHT

World 1 & 2, 1991
silver, brass, ruler, ammonite, die

In this sense, her work follows that of the surrealist painter Rene Magritte, who wrote:

> "My pictures showed objects located in places where we never come across them. This is the fulfillment of a real, if unconscious, desire on the part of most people. Even the conventional painter tries... to disturb the order in which he invariably sees objects... For me, given my determination to make the most familiar objects yell, they had to be disposed in a new order, and take on a disturbing significance: the cracks we see in our houses and on our faces seemed to me more eloquent in the sky. Table legs in turned wood lost the innocent aspect we ascribe to them when they suddenly appeared towering over a forest. A woman's body floating above a town was a favorable substitute for the angels who never appeared to me... This disturbing poetic effect which, produced by the deployment of objects taken from reality, would give the real world from which they were borrowed a disturbing, poetic meaning through a quite natural interchange."[1]

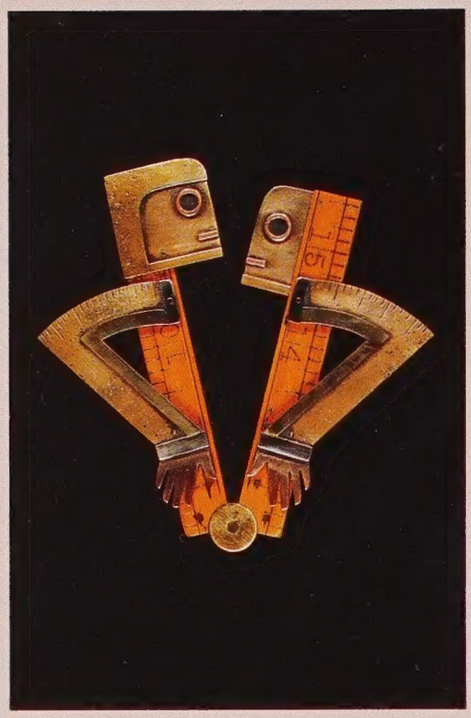
Attitude is from a series Kiff made about "two-ness" dating from 1991. It is constructed from an old, collapsible ruler she found at a junk store. Intrigued by the opening and closing mechanism and moved by the craftsmanship of the old tool, Kiff thought a long time about what to make with it before she fashioned the hinged, wooden instrument into a figure. The brass edge from which the ruler hung has been converted to a face seen in profile. The title refers to the arrangement of the parts of a body; a point of view; an arrogant disposition; and in ballet, to an angular positioning of the leg. Slemmons's figure holds its "arms" confrontationally on its hips at right angles; it wears an emphatic, dramatic, slightly comical expression. The two sides of the ruler open to reveal a hidden, second face, which faces the first. *Attitude* is a witty portrait of two individuals in one. Referencing the idea of multiple personalities, or the merging of two lovers into one, the folding ruler marks the increments with which one measures up, how we size each other up, and whether we are united or divided, open or closed.

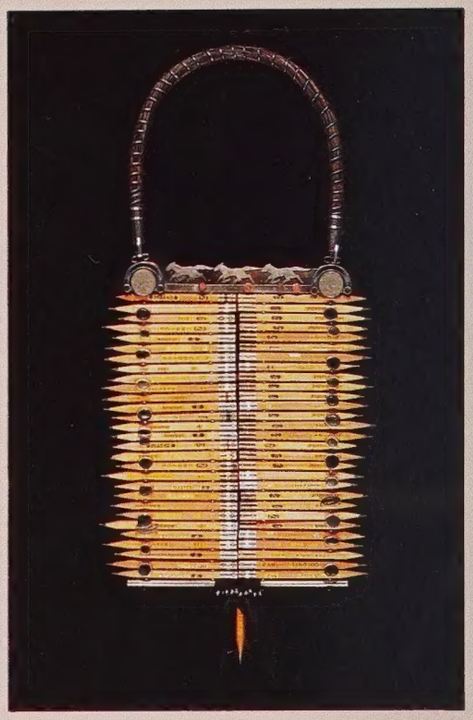
Kiff's sense of responsibility to a well-made old ruler is a good example of her respect for fine craftsmanship in general, and for her own work in particular.

> "I like my pieces to have a warmth to them... I like it that you can pick it up and even bash it or scratch it and it's not going to kill it some how, that it can take a lot of handling, and that the patina from handling it and wearing it doesn't diminish it. I like the things to be sturdy and well made. There's been a funny kind of prejudice, in the eighties, I guess, about things that were well made — 'Well, it's only craft', if it's beautifully made. If a work is gutsy, it means it's messy. But the trouble was that a lot of work was called gutsy because it was messy, and I guess I'm interested in something that can be tough but beautiful at the same time, and a kind of tension that comes from different things happening."

The tension of the unexpected figures heavily in Kiff's jewelry. The materials she uses are recognizable but far from home. What's going on is not immediately apparent because, at first glance, there are only displaced objects and fragments of ideas. There's also nothing very mysterious or intimidating about pencils or rulers. In a surrealist's version of bait and switch, the viewer is drawn in.

One of the best examples of this can be found in *Sticks, Stones and Words*, a breastplate modeled after 19th century Sioux Indian armor made from bird bones. Kiff has created her own politically-tinged, poetically-loaded version of this antique frontispiece from old wooden pencils in a necklace. The yellow paint of all the pencils has been filed off, except for the names of the manufacturers: Supreme, Save, Choice, American, Master, Preferred, Balance, Colonel, USA Federal and Blackfeet. The pencil, worn to a stub, dangling from the bottom center was made by the Union pencil company. The shaved pencils raise the question, "Who scalped whom?" Four tiny, pastel-pink erasers are bezel set at the top of the breastplate, just below the silhouette of three galloping horses. The Plain Indians wore bones across their chests as a symbolic form of armor; Kiff's breast plate of pencils suggests the power of the written word, of writing as a form of protection, a means of establishing order and communicating. In the context of the U.S. government and the Plains Indians, one might think of broken treaties, and the efforts to erase native Americans and their culture from North America.





It is Kiff's talent for juxtaposing images which gives her most successful pieces the visual equivalent of an electrical charge. Familiar objects are plucked like so many atoms from their scientifically desirable states of rest, radiating a tangible quantity of energy as they excitedly seek a new, stable and balanced condition with the other displaced materials in the unfamiliar context of her arrangements. The artist's thoughtful manipulation of imagery infuses her work with enough substance and contradiction to hold the components in uneasy balance. The multifarious associations, contrasts, puns and clichés she establishes add up to more than the sum of the disparate parts, and they continue to hold our attention long after we've realized, "Oh, they *are* pencils."

Again she quotes Magritte, speaking of his 1933 painting *Elective Affinities:*

> "'We are familiar with a bird in a cage. Our interest is quickened if the bird is replaced by a fish or a shoe but although these images are interesting they are unfortunately accidental, arbitrary. It is possible to arrive at a new image that will stand up to examination through its definitiveness, its rightness – the image which shows an egg in the cage.'"[2]
>
> "What he's talking about here is imagery and how it works and I think he's making an important point. Just because you choose to put two objects, two images next to each other – which I think is being done a lot these days – doesn't necessarily mean there is any further meaning to it other than the kind of immediate, 'Oh, those are weird images together.' I think that people can mistake meaning. If there isn't any further meaning, there isn't any further meaning and he's obviously thinking about it in a more complicated way than simply juxtaposing two different images. There is the additional layer of the egg in the cage, rather than a shoe in the cage. An egg is connected to a bird as well as the whole notion of the possibility of birth being completely enclosed in the cage. It has a lot more suggestiveness to it. A lot of what Magritte was doing in his work is what I think I am interested in doing also. I feel an affinity with the ways he worked with imagery and stimulates your thoughts as well as your feelings about things."

Transport, made in 1990 for the *Artworks for AIDS* exhibit in Seattle, is both intellectually and emotionally one of Kiff's most engaging works. The miniature, two wheeled silver cart alludes to the personal trauma of mortal illness and the historical countenance of mass deaths. Such carts have been used in cities throughout the ages to remove victims of epidemics; "there is an implied connection between old and new plagues – with specific reference to AIDS."

FAR LEFT

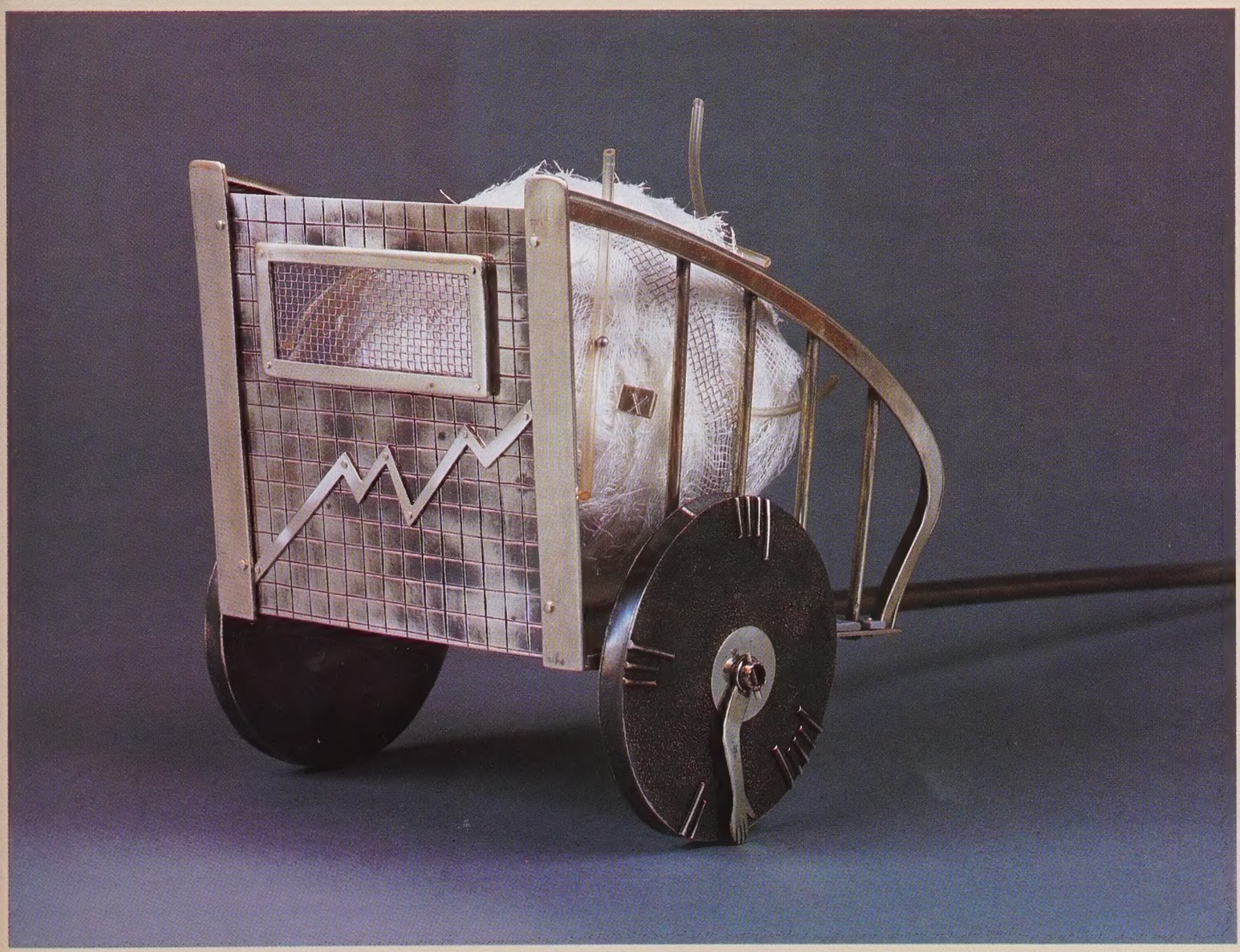
Attitude, 1991
brass, ruler

LEFT

Sticks and Stones and Words, 1992
silver, copper, nickel, pencils,
pebbles, horse hair, erasers, deer skin

BELOW

Transport, 1990
sterling silver, aluminum, gauge,
mesh, tape, tubing, pearls



RIGHT

Eye of the Bee Holder, 1986
sterling silver, ebony

BELOW

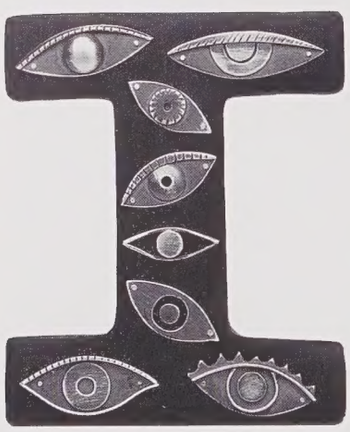
Self Portrait, 1986
sterling silver, ebony

NEXT PAGE

Parents 1 & 2, 1991
silver, brass, ruler, copper

There are graphic references to disease – a hospital bed, charts, tubes, bandages, screens, etc. A ball riding in the cart is made from a collection of the materials and experiences which define illness. It refers to a Yakima Indian tradition from Eastern Washington:

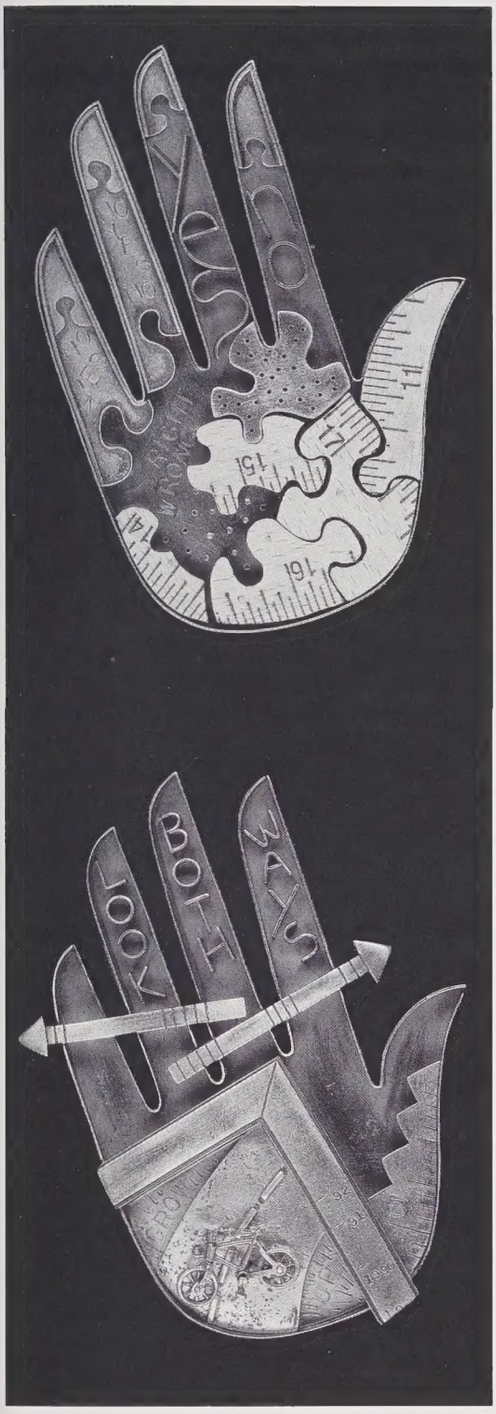
> "When a female child is born, she is given a piece of string with a small object or bead tied to it. Thereafter, important moments and events are marked with additional strings and bits which eventually become layered into a ball. In old age, the woman unrolls the ball and tells the story of her life to her grandchildren – in reverse. In this piece, the reference is ironic – the ball is wrapped with gauze, bits of tubing, surgical tape, poetic words, pearls; indicating all that is accumulated through the course of an illness. The arms on the wheels (like gauges or clock hands) hang down whether the cart is in motion or not, indicating the inexorable course of AIDS.
>
> The cart transports this ball "'with ceremony as a kind of offering to the dignity and courage of those who struggle with AIDS and its consequences. It is intended to invoke a shudder of understanding in the face of death.'"



Not all of Kiff's pieces are personal memorials or elaborate philosophical forays; "Sometimes, after working in a very intense way I want to do something more gestural and more simple, that I can do quickly instead of spending weeks working on it." Simple, eloquent compositions and a witty demeanor characterize such pieces as *Eye of the Bee Holder, Self Portrait,* and a series of bird pins entitled *Flock Talk.*

Kiff frequently works with images which have been used by artists for thousands of years – the hand, the eye, the human torso – always trying to present them from a new angle. If she can reveal something unfamiliar about something recognizable, her jewelry will carry unique content *as well as* the power of both conscious and unconscious historical references accompanying the image. This transformation of a would-be banal symbol is yet another example of the "displaced familiar" – it *is* another hand pin, another eye brooch – but Kiff has added something fresh to its long history.

In this manner, the human hand became the foundation of Kiff's most ambitious series to date: the *Hands of the Heroes.* Over a three year period, Kiff made more than fifty hands, honoring such diverse personalities as Satchel Paige, Buddha, Emily Dickinson, Don Quixote, Roald Amundsen, Nelson Mandela, Jacques Cousteau, Leonardo da Vinci, Sigmund Freud, Annie Oakley, and Colette. Images and objects referencing the essence of each individual were fabricated and collaged together on identical, oxidized sterling templates: a commemorative tradition established by Kiff ten years earlier and a narrative tradition defined succinctly by Lloyd Herman as "storytelling... by reducing stories to symbols with strong, but often personal associations."[3]



Making each hand from the same silver prototype was a self-imposed restriction Kiff found both challenging and liberating and she drew dozens of hands before settling on a form which had the versatile configuration she desired. Simplicity has always been a fundamental, significant element in Kiff's compositions, compelling because it leaves no margin for error, no baroque baubles behind which to hide. The hand of Don Quixote is an armor-clad gauntlet inset with a single, red leather rose. Gandhi's fingers are cut out in the shapes of keys. Sigmund Freud's hand is home to the id, the ego, the superego; inside the hinged middle finger is a small sterling penis; the two doors in the palm open to reveal two interlocking puzzle pieces, one black, one red.

In 1991, Kiff combined the hand with another favorite object, the ruler, in a series of ten pins entitled *Measuring Up*, commissioned by the Washington State Arts Commission to be exhibited in public schools throughout the state, notably, alongside paintings, sculptures, prints and photographs by nine other artists selected from a nationwide search. Kiff chose the hand because the image is well-suited to children both visually and metaphorically; she added rulers, numbers and pieces of slate – common classroom materials with which children are well acquainted. She made five pairs of hands focusing on five different sets of standards by which students are measured: those determined by themselves, parents, friends, school and the world at large. This series is an excellent example of ten brooches which are enhanced when exhibited as a group, but they are also designed to make complete individual statements.

Like many jewelers, Kiff acknowledges the occasionally prickly connection of jewelry to sculpture. Jewelry's mobile essence – its wearability – makes it an ideal forum for public art, and especially appealing to a metalsmith intent on interacting with a wide audience. However, her infusion of expansive, literary ideas into this intimate, often ornamental format has prompted more than one well-wisher to suggest, "'Oh. Well – why don't you make sculpture?" the implication being that sculpture is bigger and therefore better.

> "I confess to having twinges of worry about that from time to time in the past, but, in fact, I guess I just dug in my heels and thought, All the more reason to try and do it with jewelry, because, again, it's an unexpected place to think about these things, to see these things... And this is what I am interested in – making some kind of connection with people. I like thinking that they'll see something and get excited about it, or it will make them think some slightly different thought that day. If you can do that much, well, then it's worth it to me."

It is, finally, the lingering quality in Kiff's jewelry which makes it so potent – the visceral mysteries and paradoxes offer us the rare opportunity to recognize the sublime in the familiar, and invite our contemplation over time. The materials are the message, and the message is what counts. Kiff summarizes it most eloquently:

"The problem is always how to make something of utmost clarity with questions still inside it. Imagine wearing a necklace made of ice. After a warm evening all that remains is a memory and a sensation."

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Notes

1. Sylvester, David, *The Silence of the World*, The Menil Foundation, Abrams, 1992.
2. Ibid.
3. Herman, Lloyd E., introductory essay to *Brilliant Stories: American Narrative Jewelry* catalogue, 1993.

The following is reprinted from the 1992 monograph published by the Haystack Institute. Haystack Mountain School of Crafts established the Haystack Institute as an annual forum to examine ideas of philosophical importance to the craft field. The first institute entitled "Craft in the 90's: A Return to Materials" was held in 1991 and featured presentations by ceramist Wayne Higby, museum curator Jonathan Fairbanks, and art historian Nancy Corwin. The 1992 institute featured presentations by Janet Koplos and Warren Selig. Another monograph in the same series documents a Haystack session "Craft and Learning" and features ceramist William Daley, textile artist Audrey Walker and arts educator Jo-Anna Moore. The monographs are $4.50 each, or $12 for a set of three and can be ordered from Haystack, P.O. Box 518, Deer Isle, Maine 04627. This year's institute will be held on August 7 and will feature presentations by Gerhardt Knodel and Sarah Bodine and Michael Dunas, which will later be published as a monograph.

Crafts Criticism

BY JANET KOPLOS

Crafts criticism is a mess. It has a shaky past, uncertain credentials, no theoretical basis, and only a vague vision of an ideal. A lot of it is defensive, operating on the assumption that crafts is an underdog field, unfairly denied status as art. Yet almost never does this defensive criticism really consider whether being defined as art is a good thing. In addition, crafts criticism is the focus of endless lamentations – that there are no opportunities to publish criticism, that there is no suitable language of criticism, that there are no capable critics. (My favorite expression of this last idea is Howard Yana Shapiro's comment that in crafts criticism, there are too many 25-watt bulbs in 100-watt sockets. Of course, I think it's funny because I assume he's not talking about me!)

As alarming as the idea may sound, I think we have to consider the likelihood that the problems with criticism relate to the problems of the crafts works themselves. Part of the difficulty with crafts criticism is that crafts has tended to be defined as a community rather than as an aesthetic position – which would be naturally disposed to argumentation and therefore to critical discussion. Craftspeople have tended to be intuitive and not terribly articulate. (Those may be American attributes rather than ones belonging to crafts; on the evidence of the British magazine *Crafts,* it seems that craftspeople can be eloquent and even theoretical.)

An important motivation for the crafts revival after World War II, and for the second surge in the '60s, was the wish to choose values for living and to create the things with which to surround oneself; a consequent process was to establish a shared sense of identity – that is, a sense of community – with others who made the same choices (this is a philosophical stance, of course, even if nobody puts it that way). A community will be more placid if there's no institutionalized encouragement for people to challenge each other's positions. In crafts, the attitude has been that "we're all in this together." Sociologically, that's wonderful. Critically, it's stifling.

There *are* opportunities to publish – that lamentation is unfounded. There aren't necessarily opportunities to make a living as a critic. But then, that's almost impossible in art criticism, as well. (I heard a lawyer say recently that art criticism may have the worst pay of any professional field.) In the 1950s *Craft Horizons,* under the editorship of Rose Slivka, called upon poets and playwrights, such as Richard Howard and Israel Horowitz, to write evocatively about crafts; one might say that they were the first contemporary crafts critics. *American Ceramics* was invented a decade ago for the specific purpose of providing a place for critical writing about clay. Other crafts magazines have regularly brought up the subject, even if it wasn't the primary concern. Occasionally thoughtful criticism appears in unexpected locations – for example, Barry Targan's column in *The Bennington Review* or Arthur Danto's writing about furniture in *The Nation* and elsewhere.

The replacement of *Craft Horizons* by *American Crafts* involved a sharp step back from criticism, because exhibition reviews were dropped. And correctly or not, the magazine is seen today as disinclined to make negative statements, because its professed purpose is to promote crafts, and pointing out a work's flaws would do nothing to encourage collectors. Still, articles in *American Craft* provide extended consideration of work and occasionally cross the divide into criticism.

In sum, there are opportunities for criticism, even if the climate is not overwhelmingly hospitable to it.

And this matter of language makes me groan. For at least a decade we've been having symposia and such concerned with the language of crafts. Everybody talks about the need, nobody proposes the language. (But that's human nature, you know. I just read in *The New Yorker* some words of Juvenal, the Roman poet and satirist of the first century A.D., which translate as: "Everyone wants to know, but no one wants to pay the price." So it goes then and now.) Nobody has taken the trouble to survey and analyze the criticism that has been written about crafts to see what sort of vocabulary is being used. There may be some hope for this to happen, because some of the recent Renwick Fellows have researched criticism, but nothing has yet been published that I know of.

So I'm leaping into the void.

To start off, I'm going to assert that, as a product of art schools, and of such criticism as there has been, the whole crafts world has been like Cinderella's wicked stepsisters trying to squash their big feet into the glass slipper – that is, crafts has been trying to be something that it's not. For 40 years craftspeople have been trying to make painting and sculpture – usually not trying as hard as possible, more like just standing with their feet in the same place and leaning toward art. (The advantage of not trying *too* hard, of course, is that you always have an excuse for failure.)

One consequence of this persistent inclination has been a tendency of craft critics to borrow the nominal vocabulary of art criticism, along with a tendency of everyone to treat the whole crafts field as a unity, which it is *not.* In the process of grinding up crafts in the art machine, what is useful and valuable and distinctive about crafts is often forgotten or disparaged.

Let me state the obvious: crafts isn't just things that want to be called art and want to be looked at in galleries and museums. (And anyway, that part of our visual world, that segment of the whole aesthetic sea that we're immersed in, is both a tiny and a rather recently formed bay [to continue my aquatic metaphor]. The category is so limited that even some painters and sculptors have misgivings about it. There are many examples of artists throughout the 20th century, and especially in the last two decades, pursuing public and functional roles to escape the galleries and the museums that crafts are struggling to get into.)

But anyway, without getting any deeper into that argument at this point, let me enumerate some of the varieties of crafts. One kind is the work using conventional crafts materials that succeeds in making it into art galleries and art magazines. So far, work in clay has most often been the recipient of art-world acceptance. In addition, crafts encompasses what we can call artisanry – for example, the functional ware that potters make for sale in their towns or at art fairs. Besides that, there's public commissions – for example the large-scale textile works that hang in hotel atriums. In addition, there's folk art, such as Appalachian jugs or baskets. There are a few craftspeople who make design prototypes for lines of porcelain dinnerware, jewelry, or luxury glass collectibles. There's also hobby crafts, although our crafts field always tries to distance itself from the hobbyists. And finally, and most nebulously, there's the stuff that's called "exhibition work" but that stays within traditional craft forms – for example, teapots that can't be used and are made to show.

Of these groups, *only* in the first and last case does it make any sense to write "art criticism" about the work. That's because criticism, as it is extracted and extrapolated from the art world, deals with personal expression, with originality, but at rock bottom; with ideas. Art is always *about* something. Art introduces ideas visually, and the things may be philosophical, political, social, historical, spiritual, psychological. Even in the case of abstract art, there is presumed to be an underlying concept that may deal with formal issues or has some meaning by analogy. The fact that art is always about something means that it has layers, it's not just one thing. Both "art works in craft mediums" and "exhibition works" have this kind of subject matter, and criticism can enrich our understanding of them.

(Criticism, you understand, is not some god-given truth, not some final answer to what the work means. It is simply a proposal, a tentative interpretation, based on a very careful observation by someone who can write. Criticism is an outside view of what a work communicates, based on translating a visual language into a verbal language. Criticism is a service or an educational endeavor – although there have certainly been cases when art criticism has become so self-conscious that it has turned into a self-serving performance and actually become an impediment to understanding the art work.)

For 40 years craftspeople have been trying to make painting and sculpture – usually not trying as hard as possible, more like just standing with their feet in the same place and leaning toward art. (The advantage of not trying *too* hard, of course, is that you always have an excuse for failure.)

Although criticism can be a useful contribution to "art in craft mediums" and "exhibition works," it is destructive in the case of useful objects. Functional things differ from the intellectual and often almost cynical leading-edge art today. I hope nobody thinks that all visual objects should be art and should engage with articulable ideas. Our world and our needs are not that narrow, and squashing everything into one category just makes the category meaningless. Functional things are different from art, but they're not less, they're not dumb, they're not shallow – they're just different. Let me again state the obvious: the prime characteristic of functional work is that it performs a function. Criticism as currently constituted, being based on exhibitions in which the things on display are not supposed to be touched, cannot address function. You can tell very little about the efficiency or experience of use by just looking at an object.

Perhaps writing about functional work should never be restricted to the work alone; perhaps the whole way that a maker lives and deals with material goods should always be part of the discussion. Perhaps, the object is just the physicalization of a philosophy that shapes a lifestyle.

Critical writing about functional work has always been problematic. It might be useful to write about the work in terms of engineered design – using technical language – or it might be rewarding to talk about its physical character and the nature of the experience of using it. But that's not art criticism as we know it today, which deals with ideas. There might be some question of readership for such design information, but then, there's a question of readership for every kind of art writing, and I don't think it would be a terrible stretch for readers of most craft publications to absorb such information. Technical analysis might require some new writers, though.

Functional work still has its visual aspects, of course. It has form or shape, it has color, it has texture, it may have pattern or image. All those things can be discussed in the kind of "art appreciation" approach that I think should always be a part of good criticism, to explain how a work visually communicates. But it would be a very odd distortion to write about those aspects in isolation while disregarding the purpose of the object. Yet that's what happens when art criticism is applied to functional works.

Moreover, those visual aspects that can be discussed do not adequately encompass psychological and sociological aspects of the work that may be very important – may in fact be more important than any specifics of appearance. Perhaps writing about functional work should never be restricted to the work alone; perhaps the whole way that a maker lives and deals with material goods should always be part of the discussion. Perhaps, the object is just the physicalization of a philosophy that shapes a lifestyle.

The pernicious effect of criticism on functional work is not a matter of attacks on specific objects: the problem is that the irrelevance of "use" in art-critical discourse means that "use" is discounted. Functional work is less likely to be reviewed, and when it is reviewed the function is less likely to be discussed. The slow but inexorable result has been that use seems outdated or even mindless. My perception is that during the '80s the number of people making functional work steadily shrank. It's easy to name people, especially working in clay, who were once known for their functional work but are now doing "exhibition work," Mark Pharis, for example. No matter how justifiable the reasons for making this switch, and no matter how much I might admire the exhibition pots he is making, I still regret the loss of functional pots.

(Another reason for this shift, though, is economic rather than critical: functional work has to sell for reasonable prices or people won't be willing to use the objects – this is less true of jewelry – but the price of art can rise almost limitlessly. Thus even if functional craftspeople themselves aren't seduced by the thought of making more money for their work if it's nonfunctional, this factor can act as a damper on galleries. I remember hearing some years ago about Helen Drutt wanting to show Warren MacKenzie's pottery; he told her that she would lose money doing so because his retail prices would not produce enough income to cover her overhead even if the show sold out. I think she went ahead with the show, but the conclusion one has to draw from this situation is that functional work belongs in shops. That would be a neat solution to the problem, and an end to this discussion, if our minds weren't poisoned by the assumption that what's in a shop can't be as important as what's in a gallery.)

Critical writing can also be destructive in the case of folk crafts. Usually the beauty of folk crafts is something distilled over time by what I like to think of as a bedrock human sense-and-sensitivity that comes through when distractions are removed. There has been some philosophical speculation that purely functional things are by their nature beautiful – an interesting idea that the straightforwardness of function is inherently beautiful. Folk crafts are defined – and they appeal to us – because of their distance from trends and from arbitrariness. But writing about folk crafts often has the unintended result of destroying that healthy distance.

The best example of this that I know about happened in Japan, but it could happen anywhere. It's the famous case of Onta pottery, which was "discovered" in the backwoods of the island of Kyushu, so to speak, by Soetsu Yanagi, the founder of the Japan Folkcrafts Museum. He wrote about it as the perfect realization of community-based cooperative pottery production yielding useful forms that exemplified what he called "healthy beauty." As a result of the attention he brought to Onta pottery, collectors and dealers wanted to acquire it, so prices rose, making it awfully expensive to use. Then some traditional forms were dropped because there was less demand for them among the new buyers. And foreign celebrities such as Bernard Leach visited and introduced foreign forms and practices, such as pitchers or handles. In addition, individual potters were singled out for attention, and that upset the social system of the pottery village. The consequence was that Onta became modern pottery, not folk pottery. You can't have your cake and eat it, too.

It's hard to say what would be better for folk crafts. Yanagi extolled Onta forms, so this example shows us that even praise can be damaging. The only way Onta ware could have been perpetuated in the form that Yanagi discovered it would be if he hadn't discovered it. Maybe we should conclude that there should be no writing about folk crafts. But there is a natural human interest in it, and besides, we have to accept that it can't be locked in a time capsule involuntarily (and perhaps not even voluntarily). For an example closer to home, we know that long ago Native Americans adapted their art to the availability of European trade beads and, later, chemical dyes; after the passage of a certain length of time the new materials have been accepted even by the purists who really want work to remain unchanged in a classic state. The world doesn't work that way. Culture goes through cycles just as much as anything else.

If we set aside the argument about change, there's still a separate question of whether criticism is appropriate for folk crafts. In this instance, critics can't talk about personal expression. That aspect of art is seldom present in folk crafts. Ideas can certainly be discussed, but the ideas in folk crafts – whether manifested in form or decoration – are usually cultural standards, so there is seldom the kind of multilevel ambiguity that distinguishes the stuff we call art. Today the symbols used in folk crafts are used because their meaning is shared in the community. They are understood by all members of the community. This suggests that the interesting aspects of folk crafts can be addressed in anthropological terms, without the speculative projection of meaning that is typical of art criticism. And with folk crafts, as with artisanry, there's more to the story than just the object, so criticism is too narrow. So here again, art criticism strikes out.

Criticism, being geared to discussion rather than sales, does not have much relevance to the aims of production lines.

Both mass-production lines of functional and decorative objects and public-commission works also present difficulties for criticism, but works in these categories aren't as vulnerable to criticism's harmful effects as artisanry or folk crafts are. Both unquestionably have aesthetic aspects. Production lines sometimes don't differ at all in visual character from the singular or limited-edition products of artisans, and if there is a difference it tends to be only a greater refinement and standardization in mass-produced work. The philosophical claims that are made for the preferability of handmade work over factory-made work are actually extra-aesthetic – that is, they're things you know through ways other than seeing. They're no less valid than visual aspects, though. In fact, in these days when politically correct leading-edge art criticism insists on taking into account the cultural context in which art is produced, it would be interesting to try to make an art-criticism case for the moral preferability of handmade work. Such a case would have to be argued, presented as a manifesto, but such a reasoned ideological approach is uncommon in crafts criticism. – So who would do it?

The marketing systems of these two fields make a big difference in their relationship to criticism. Factory-produced work has more to gain from advertising or exposure to buyers through home-decorating magazines. Criticism, being geared to discussion rather than sales, does not have much relevance to the aims of production lines.

Public-commission crafts occupy a very visible yet a very ambiguous position. In hotels and corporate lobbies this work is likely to be treated as decor rather than art and to be unlabeled. The same thing happens to paintings in the same setting, so the problem is not in the crafts works themselves. The difficulty that craft or art faces in this context raises interesting questions about "art in life," and about how much of art's power derives from its placement and treatment rather than from inherent qualities of the work – questions I don't have time to go into here.

Crafts works placed in public settings are usually abstract and usually large. They tend to concentrate on such formal interests as color, structure, or texture, which are presumed to be understandable and appealing to an untutored public; they are intended to be pleasant rather than intellectually or politically challenging.

It's a quirk of of today's art world that likable work is seen as less "worthy" than difficult or unpleasant work. There is no automatic correlation. Still, the public art that gets treated by art critics is the work that's different: difficult, or critical, or austere, or challenging. There's more to say about work that is an exception to the rule. Use of craft materials is not cause for exclusion from critical writing about public works. So that's what criticism focuses on. Use of crafts materials is not cause for exclusion from critical writing about public works. Crafts do better here than in some other situations. Still, the public works are never placed *for the purpose* of attracting critical attention. Their target audience is average people, rather than critics. The work itself does not seem to accrue prestige from favorable criticism and so become more valuable to its owner. But favorable public attention – such as people liking to have their picture taken in front of the work – has an intangible value for the owner. In the case of public works, criticism is not pernicious, but neither is it particularly significant. More appropriate are simply "reports" on this sort of work, such as newspaper coverage, or analyses that focus more on public response than on artistic intentions.

Crafts makers believe that art is more important than crafts, so they look at the shows, read the magazines, and, in following the trends, they come off looking like copyists.

"Exhibition works" and "art made in crafts materials" are the two categories of work that are made to show, made to talk about, made to be critically analyzed, in accordance with our 20th-century practice of art criticism. The work that has been presented successfully in the forums of art doesn't really need discussion here. I'd include Lenore Tawney, Ken Price, Robert Arneson, Viola Frey, and Betty Woodman among this number. Usually they show in art galleries, not craft galleries, and their work has drawn the attention of well-known art critics – Peter Schjeldahl, for example – and they have been reviewed or even featured in art magazines. Ken Price made the cover of *Art in America* in 1980. This work is easily discussible in the terms art critics normally use, or else it is somehow so compelling that it forces critics to use its language, to choose a vocabulary keyed to its originality. You will note that the five I mentioned retain particular qualities and meanings that derive from crafts – they don't make something that looks like photographs or collage or whatever but *happens* to be clay. I think that's significant.

"Exhibition works" is probably the largest and most bothersome category. These works are the ones I mentioned that lean toward art, that adopt its forms or its language or its subject matter but that don't adopt the art emphasis on individuality or originality. They continue to be shown at crafts galleries and in juried crafts exhibitions – self-segregating themselves. They have just enough in common with the other forms of art that it's rather easy for members of the art world to look at them and say, "This looks familiar, and it's second-rate art." To some degree, that criticism is justified: even such important and successful work as the Abstract-Expressionist sculpture of Peter Voulkos follows by several years the art-world work (in this case, mostly painting) that inspired it. Let me baldly state another truth: crafts makers believe that art is more important than crafts, so they look at the shows, read the magazines, and, in following the trends, they come off looking like copyists. Voulkos's "innovation" was only to apply something from painting to his ceramic material. His work has been very influential, and a case can be made that his adaptation is successful. Yet in general, by copying or by responding to someone else's invention, you can never catch up. You stay at the end of the line. (At the same time that I talk about this influence from exposure to art, I must observe, contradictorily, that it's also true that most craftspeople don't really keep up with art, aren't very well informed about new work and new artists. The work that gets through to them is what's well established, which is what I mean by this work not really entering the art world but just leaning toward it, and is also why crafts tends to look dated in an art context.)

Yet to confuse matters further, crafts has such a rich and varied history that often when some new trend shows up in the art world, the crafts world declares, "Oh, but we've been doing that all along!" This is a pathetic situation, because while it's true that crafts had the precedent (the latest example is the art world's newly found multiculturalism), to bring up that fact is to use the defense of the powerless. Crafts did it all along, but crafts criticism never made anything of it, never set multiculturalism as an ideological foundation stone of crafts work – until it became important in art. The "me, too!" defense just proves again that the art world is the one that determines the subject of the conversation. If you've read Deborah Tannen you might equate the crafts position with the female role in conversational exchange – typically the woman introduces topics but the male determines whether or not they are taken up.

It's not hard to see the blood kinship between art and crafts. But crafts is definitely different from art. People who have been looking at painting and sculpture and turn to "exhibition crafts" frequently think that the work is too timid and too small. This, again, is a case of art setting the ground rules: most leading-edge art today is large scale, and the occasional work that's not – a good example is Joel Shapiro's tiny early sculptures – tend to be amazingly dense and by that means are as assertive and demanding of attention as larger sculpture.

The truth of this matter is that crafts in general is more concerned with surface qualities than art is, and thus is more involved with subtleties. Crafts more often places a premium on communicating the natural character of the material it's made of, and that usually requires a close look. This intimacy is an identifying character of crafts and it's certainly not a weakness per se, but it does require shifting gears as one moves from painting and sculpture to crafts. People who spend all their time involved with crafts see the subtleties, see the innovations, and can easily get excited by good work, whereas people from the art world may only see a kind of diminishment. Furniture currently seems to be one place where there is some potential to overcome this dichotomy. A bench or a desk is large enough to make a bold statement in a gallery, yet because furniture is used it is perfectly normal for people to get very close to it so they see the subtleties, too. Craft galleries often perpetuate or exacerbate the problem of this change in focal distance, I guess it could be called, because they line the gallery walls with objects placed too close together and set in display cases that distance them and suppress their distinctive qualities. Crafts galleries present work more like shops do than like art galleries do.

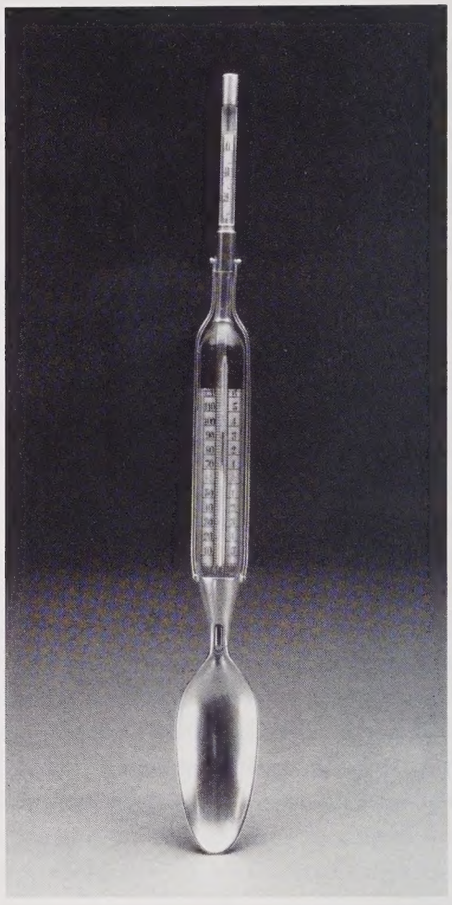
Criticism should not be seen as an honor but simply as one way of discussing a particular type of work.

Crafts also differs from most art in terms of directness and metaphor. A painter's activity is so divorced from normal life that every action has to be seen as freighted with intention and meaning, whereas a craft object may be just what it is – a body adornment, a utensil, a protective covering – unless the maker consciously works at adding other meanings. These basic purposes are keyed to the human body, so crafts usually is made in a familiar, intimate scale that doesn't demand our full attention as the extremes of scale in painting or sculpture often do. Also, the tangibility, the reality, the material identity of craft objects are almost indomitable, which means that it's hard for a craft object ever to create a pictorial illusion of a different scale. Only rarely, say, in some of Jack Earl's little scenes, do you look at crafts and get pulled into an imaginary space – an effect that's quite common in painting. Usually when crafts makes a convincing illusion, there's a correspondence between the size of the craft object and the size of what's being depicted – for example, in the ceramics of Richard Shaw or Marilyn Levine. All these factors of difference result in crafts that strive to be art; thus they often seem modest and unexciting. But it doesn't have to be that way. Crafts' best route to art is to capitalize on its strength, it's own character, doing the things that other art mediums can't do. I think the beadwork necklaces of Joyce Scott are just that kind of extraordinary achievement. Or I remember some works by Renie Breskin Adams that I saw maybe 10 years ago that showed dizzying scenes that were made all the more vertiginous by the movement of texture in the thread.

But perhaps if craftspeople develop more confidence to do exactly that, to capitalize on their differences, they'll stop worrying about being art and just be themselves. That doesn't mean being a wicked stepsister or even a weak stepsister, it just means being an individual with confidence in your own identity.

In closing, I'd like to say that criticism should be applied only to that segment of the crafts world that pursues ideas, originality, ambiguity and the other characteristics of art. Craftspeople should recognize that if they want the "privileges" of art, they're also going to have to accept the "responsibilities," and that means jumping into the art world and facing tough criticism. Still, criticism should not be seen as an honor but simply as one way of discussing a particular type of work. Crafts critics should not struggle always to sound as if they're talking about art, but should adopt the language of the object they're describing, even if that includes aspects that are not currently popular in the art world. Craft galleries should allow space between objects and at the same time should allow intimate approach. Craft publications should not try to treat all aspects of crafts in the same tone and the same "elevated" regard which has the regrettable effect of distancing these things from our lives. Crafts publications also should consolidate, so that when there is important writing of whatever sort, it can serve an educational function for more than just the little section of the crafts world that reads a medium-specific magazine. And finally, craftspeople should remember what brought them to the field and to the material, and should be true to their own hearts and not be swayed by what others are doing.

Janet Koplos is Associate Editor of *Art in America* magazine. Her articles have appeared in *Atlanta,* and the *Atlanta Journal and Constitution,* as well as in *Horizon, American Craft* and *American Ceramics.*



Points of Departure: Four Master Candidates and Faculty in Metals

University of Massachusetts, Dartmouth
101 Arch Street
January 23 – February 28, 1993
The Society of Arts and Crafts, Boston, Massachusetts
175 Newbury Street
January 25 – February 26, 1993

by Gail M. Brown

The first in a series of exhibitions at The Society of Arts and Crafts to honor 1993, the Year of American Craft, the exhibition *Points of Departure: Four Master Candidates and Faculty in Metals, University of Massachusetts, Dartmouth* was a testimonial to the value of the academic process at its best; artists who teach and creatively nurture the next generation's talent, while continuing to actively pursue their own work. A studio environment geared to promote individual exploration and interaction of technical and conceptual challenges and offering subtle guidance and ongoing dialogue encourages personal questioning and fosters risk taking. The visual evidence of this successful support was seen in the strength and diversity of the work presented.

Joy Raskin explores flatware as sculpture and social commentary. Almost every piece is functional, but, many ask us to reconsider that function as well. Her humor points to what we know of and what we do with objects. She offers original solutions combining functions of measurement, containment and manipulation of implements. She invents droll objects which address weight, scale, and flexibility. She asks us to think about the ideas of the function, purpose, and usability. *Thermometer Spoon,* 1992, (sterling silver, glass thermometer) gives us a visual wedding of cause and effect, and perhaps makes "the idea" of medicine easier to take. Her irony knows no bounds, and apparantly her inventiveness is similarly unlimited. Hers is a youthful exuberance for materials, techniques and ideas and her fresh approach speaks of undaunted possibilities.

Currently working in mixed media, Linda Sherer imparts narratives of personal importance to functional furniture. The cabinets exhibited are about specific storage; familiar forms which address the nature of their potential contents. Speaking as much about the idea of a cupboard and a linen cabinet as to form, *Cup Cabinet,* 1992 (poplar, pecan veneer, slate, beeswax, dye, milk paint), celebrates a display case as a formal altar. The juxtaposition between the images – the wax cup and the potential for real cups to fill the four shelves – sustain the notion of how objects embody ideas. The work provokes thoughts about the relationships of furniture to sculpture, content to function. These possibilities are entertained while materials are explored, and historical references to furniture are made in new ways. She combines something unexpected with the familiar, making it quite individual.

Deborah Darr's works ask viewers to look at everyday objects and reconsider their potential. She deals with language, education and childhood games. She encourages exploration of our assumptions about common functional articles. She confronts viewers with ideas, invites participation and challenges them to reconsider. She focuses on the arrested moment, introduces phrases and unexpected contexts to every-day things. Imposing text and symbols onto found furniture she translates the pieces into non-functional sculpture whose images and ideas are provocative. *Labor for Love,* 1992 (wood, paint, chalk), appears to make play of memories of primary school, including smeared chalk boards and the ubiquitous apple for the teacher. The message questions that which seems all too familiar.

LEFT

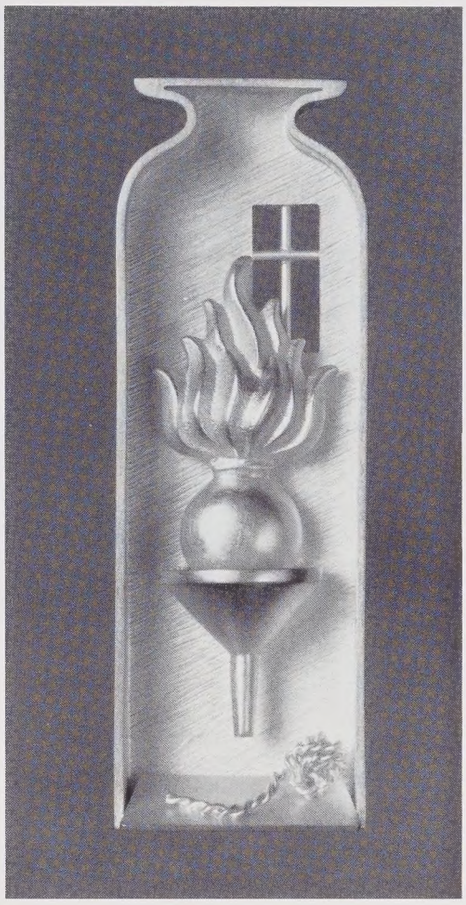
Joy Raskin
Thermometer Spoon, 1992
sterling silver, glass, themometer
9 x ¼ x ⅜ x ¾″

RIGHT

Susan Hamlet
Brooch – Elements of Escape, 1992
sterling silver
2¼ x ¾ x ½″
Photograph by Bob Hirsch

FAR RIGHT

Alan Burton Thompson
Sight Unseen, 1992
24k gold plate on sterling silver and copper, acrylic, found objects
6 x 2¼ x ¼″



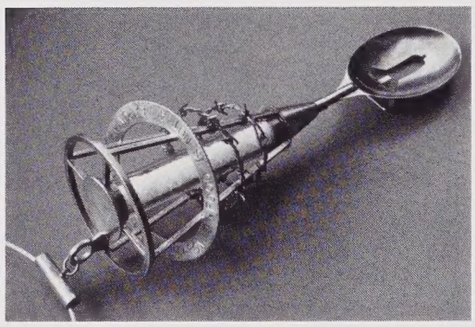
Amy Hudon's kinetic brooches are highly architectural and crafted to be worn in different ways. When worn they appear to be about structure and complex support systems; when closed they address more formal issues regarding linear and planar forms in asymmetrical compositions. *Brooch/Structure II*, 1992 sterling silver, 24k yellow gold, 14k green gold, and apatite, in the open mode stands away from the body and becomes a model diagram of engineering in miniature. The works of precious metals and stones, are elaborate devices referencing beams, struts, trusses and joinery compacted in a wearable scale. They are equally strong as design forms in open or closed, horizontal or vertical orientations. Within this body of work one appreciates the building of a dynamic vocabulary: an exploration of a range of mechanical possibilities, and a strong sense of accomplishment in their tabulation.

This exhibition also gives us the opportunity to see the most current explorations of the artists/faculty. Alan Burton Thompson has enhanced his new brooches with a more personal vocabulary by gold plating found object elements after they are joined. The resulting complex form has an integrated harmony, yet on close examination it still invites discovery of the individual, disparate elements. He continues to study the idea of the "medals" and the messages they carry from the specific to the anonymous. The works are normally 4 to 6″ in length, formal in attitude and vertical in gesture. He reorganizes the mundane into celebration and tribute which elicits stories of pivotal human events. In *Sight Unseen,* 1992 (24k gold plate on sterling silver and copper, acrylic, found objects), a combination of sentimental references creates a romantic pictorial whose formal tranquillity is disturbed by ominous possibilities. In several pieces he opens the space exploring line and drawing, delicacy and tenuous connections. There is a grace and lightness in these choices. The one or two elements left in their unplated state serve as emphasis through their difference, referencing the power which found objects have always had for the artist.

Susan Hamlet's evolving sensibilities lie in the continuing exploration of containers, but now, in jewelry scale. The graphic forms of the *Basic Math* and *Seasons* brooch series have become vessels for story-telling as elegantly articulated bottles, buckets and jars. A select group of fabricated, miniature objects are housed within, becoming a lexicon of representational imagery: tiny tacks, draped cloths, tools and organic matter. Chosen limitations such as the use of constancy, duplication and only sterling silver to explore texture without color variation set the stages for the narratives. There is an evident exercise of intellectual power in the choices, the drawing and the forms, with messages that are ambiguous and have many-leveled associations. *Elements of Escape*, 1992 (sterling silver), presents an interior whose every object speaks of the possibilities of meaning, as well as the maker's pleasure in fabricating the individual forms. The relatively small scale calls for both exquisite articulation and a miniature monumentality. We know that nothing has been left to chance, particularly the uncertainty.

The diversity and depth of the exhibition prompted an unusually long examination which resulted in a great deal of information and satisfaction. With its historic imperative, the Society of Arts and Crafts, founded in 1897, continues to celebrate the interactive community of artists learning from one another and to educate and challenge its audience.

Gail M. Brown lives in Philadelphia and writes on jewelry and fine craft.



Food is Not a Weapon
neckpiece
nickel, silver, brass, rice,
8 x 2.5″
Photo by Will Crocker

Food For Thought sculpture and neckware, gallery installation
FROM LEFT TO RIGHT
Goddess No.1, Cornucopia, Food is not a Weapon, Staff of Life, The Future is Not Set
boxes: wood, various grains, silkscreened Plexiglas, found objects, 21 x 13 x 4″
neckpieces: mixed metals, mixed grains, glass, 8 x 2.5″
suspended sculpture: *Staff of Life,* steel, glass, copper, corn
Photography by Owen Murphy

Thomas Mann: Food For Thought

Gallery I/O
New Orleans, Louisiana
January 9 – February 3, 1993

by Bettina Wulfing

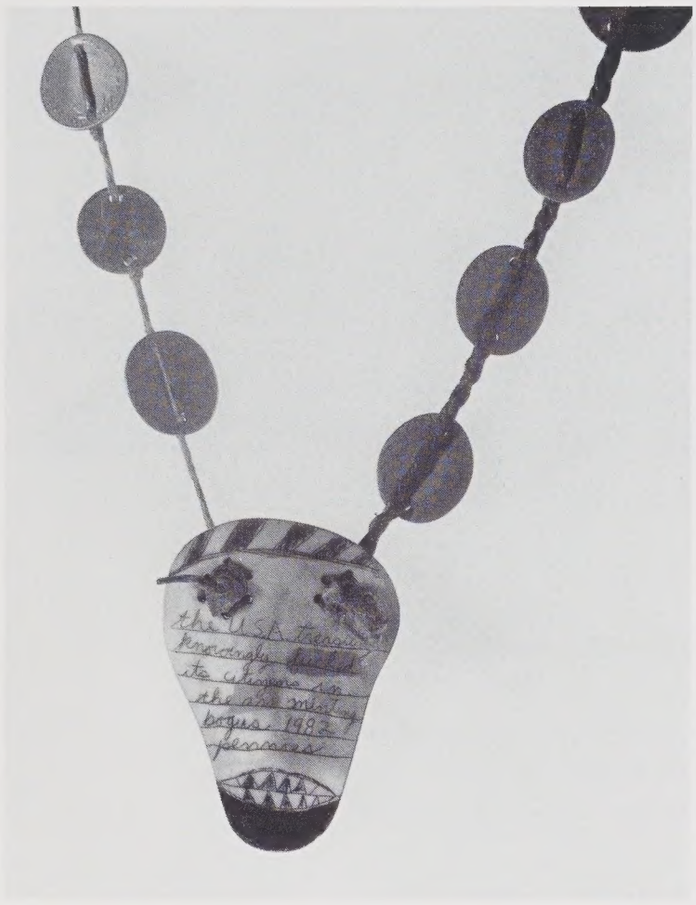
Thomas Mann is finding time to philosophize about the world's condition. Mann, a jewelry designer since 1971, is nationally known for his innovative "Techno-Romantic" creations that combine found objects with metal materials. *Food for Thought* is the artist's first solo exhibition of sculpture, jewelry and furniture in New Orleans and it reflects the contradictory reality that we live in a world with plenty of food, yet, many individuals, locally as well as globally, are still starving.

Political, social and religious issues that prevent food from reaching the hungry are the topics addressed by the pieces. The wall sculptures that form the *Hunger Series* are prefaced by printed statements on hunger such as "American consumers save, on average, a nickel on every hamburger imported from Central America, but the cost to the environment is overwhelming and irreversible." Smaller amulets are showcased in Plexiglas and wood wallboxes. The *Space Frame* series is made up of sculptures and jewelry in the forms of metal grids which hang from the ceiling and are welded with objects that are both new and recycled. The shapes of these grids resemble missiles and bombs. These large three-dimensional sculptures frame photographs, bullets, barbed wire and grains. A group of metal neckpieces have engraved titles such as "The Future is Not Set" and "There is No Fate But What We Make." They are utensils in a sense: one spoon shape is wrapped with barbed wire while the handle, a plastic vial, is filled with rice.

To this reviewer, Mann's most thought-provoking work is a furniture piece entitled *Vanity.* The vanity is a metaphor for the bridge between personal reality and cultural reality. It was inspired by Robert M. Persig's novel *Lila: Inquiry into Morals* (New York, 1991), an examination into the culture of the '90s, in much the same way that his earlier book *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance* looked at the '70s. The vanity is a workbench women use for the preparation of participating in our culture. The myths of our culture qualify our experiences and Mann uses the vanity "to explore issues concerning the quality of objects and form".

Mann looks at the human condition and implores the viewer to look at and think about both our cultural forms and our human actions. Mann asks us to eat lower on the food chain by reducing the beef in our diets and to strive to eliminate the use of food as a weapon against others. Mann's latest creations are abstract models that encourage a new way for humans to think, act and feel, especially in regard to food, in order to make this world a more peaceful planet. A portion of the proceeds from sales benefit the non-profit organization New Orleans Artists Against Hunger and Homelessness.

Bettina Wulfing is a critic and art historian who lives in New Orleans.



U.S. Treasury Necklace, 1982
bone, twine, copper, pennies

Marginality and Exile: The Work of Stuart Buehler

Susan Cummins Gallery
Mill Valley, California
January 4 – 30, 1993

by Sophie Dunn

Stuart Buehler challenges and postures Western logic through a reverie and re-creation of plenitude, a voice of limit and infinity, decay and perfume.

As Buehler deconstructs the signs of culture, meaning is discharged, expelled and reorganized, forming a claim to the truth of ambiguity, contradiction and difference. His struggle of and for existence is an incantation of rhythms and pulsions, sensations and feelings, gestures and postures.

Stuart Buehler is a map maker of ambiguity. He prolifically examines, admits and conveys the landscape of authenticity and difference, never occupying or owning the terrain he explores. His is a cartography of notation: "I have been here and this is what I have found." In gestures of both humor and horror, Buehler notes a country, a space between a place of questions without answers.

The January exhibition of small sculpture and jewelry at Susan Cummins Gallery in Mill Valley, California, represented a limited exploration of the extraordinarily prolific nature of Buehler's work. Since 1984 Buehler has mounted twelve solo shows at Jamison-Thomas Gallery in Portland and in New York. His extensive work in painting, sculptural constructions, environmental installations, photography, text, film, and mail art is quite remarkable. Producing within a field of rigorous and obsessive discipline he creates a code, a personal language of the struggle to create meaning within the increasing uniformity of images and information demanded by popular culture.

Initially Buehler was critically classified as a folk artist due to his geographic isolation and direct approach to materials. Next, his limited formal training was used as evidence for categorizing him as an outsider artist. References to art history linked the work to Calder's prints, Matisse's cutouts, and Cycladic effigies. Though these allusions are supportable, Buehler also joins hands with contemporaries who are very much in the mainstream. One who comes to mind immediately is Lucas Samaras, who engages a politics of marginality utilizing formal artistic concerns and a variety of genres.

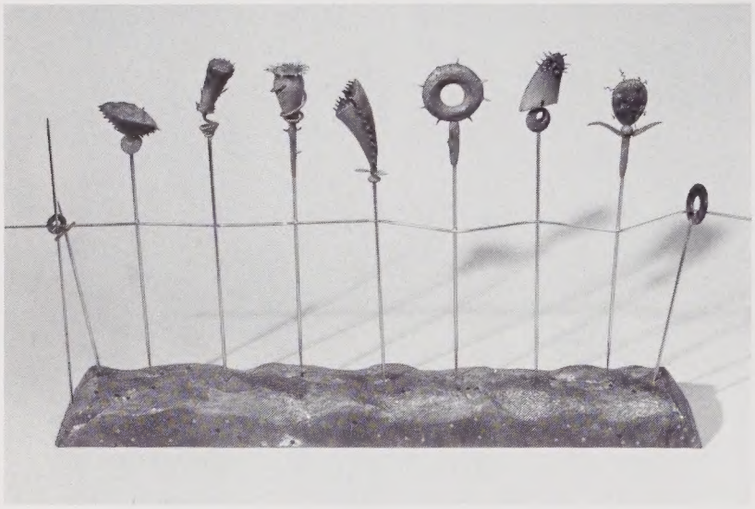
The experience of marginality and exile, both physical and cultural, is the cogent force of Buehler's work. Its dissidence is one that undermines the symbolic law of cultural order.

In *U.S. Treasury*, Buehler creates a bone skull and penny neckpiece, a rosary for the postmodern era. I could almost see a junk bond king fondling its pieces while talking on the phone, moving millions of dollars from here to there, emptying the pockets of workers, and filling his own. The piece seems to tell us that traditional institutions and cherished beliefs are decaying; religion and economics are enmeshed. *U.S. Treasury* could be an icon for a belief system of turmoil and greed.

In *Funeral Procession*, incised cow bone, ebony, rolls of undischarged caps and stick matches, some with their tips painted over, are combined to develop an obscure psychological narrative based perhaps on the death of Buehler's signature hanging man. (This is a stick figure whose reality is one of limitless possibility, one whose reality is not unlike something imagined, like Robert Musils's *The Man Without Qualities.*) The piece's visual disunity within a matrix of rhythms and repetitions leaves the viewer unable to touch anything concrete; it taps a moment before meaning.

Stuart Buehler is an artist with qualities. He is a creator of his condition.

Sophie Dunn is a writer and poet living in Mendocino and Bolinas.



California Metal

Hearst Gallery, Saint Mary's College
Moraga, California
January 16 – February 28, 1993

by Mija Riedel

ABOVE LEFT
Marilyn G. da Silva
The Devil's Garden, 1992
copper, steel, lead, wood, gesso, colored pencil
Photo by Phil Cohen

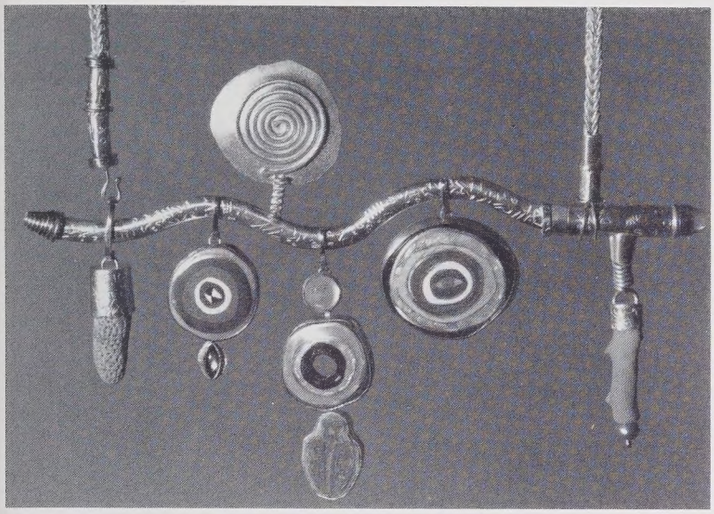
ABOVE RIGHT
Lorene Andersen
Anodized Aluminum Series, 1988
front, left to right: *Corset Cuff, Reverberation Cuff, Vortex*
back, left to right: *Untitled (Sea), Untitled (Earth)*

California Metal at the Hearst Gallery in Moraga, California was the ambitious effort of two curators from the San Francisco Bay Area to introduce the general public to the wide range of metal work being made in the Golden State today. Marvin Schenck, curator of the Hearst Art Gallery at Saint Mary's College, and Colleen Schenck, metalsmith and Education Director at the Richmond Art Center invited forty metalsmiths to participate in this exhibit, which was unveiled as a broad survey of the assorted metals and techniques being used by contemporary metal workers for diverse reasons and to multifarious ends. Planned to coincide with The Year of American Craft, *California Metal* stressed the experimental, innovative attitude which characterized much of the jewelry, sculpture, functional ware and furniture on display.

The exhibit included so many different kinds of metalwork that the three small series of pieces by Abrasha, Lorene Anderson and Marilyn da Silva were a welcome opportunity to see at least some of the artists's ideas developed a bit beyond a passing introduction. *The Devil's Garden* by Oakland artist Marilyn da Silva was one of the most interesting and animated pieces in the show. A collection of seven hat pins standing ten to twelve inches tall and made from copper, steel, lead, wood, gesso and colored pencil, the spiky variations-on-a-theme stood upright, planted in a straight line like so many carnivorous or poisonous flowers, in a fabricated copper base. Lorene Anderson, also of Oakland, was represented by a collection of five anodized aluminum bracelets, each one a unique, colorful synthesis of a rough, weighty cuff with spiraling, slinky-like ribbons which snaked above and around it. Five square brooches by San Francisco jeweler Abrasha, each measuring 2 x 2″ and made from combinations of sterling silver, 18k gold, stainless steel, plywood, diamonds and rusted steel were included from a series of 100 such pins, designed to explore the creative potential of stringent limitation.

More traditional steel-working techniques were embodied in three, Zen-like paperweights by John Fick, the forged steel furniture of William Roan, and the eloquent *Seamless Hollow Form* by C. Carl Jennings. Jennings's raised, forged steel bowl, set on its own horseshoe-shaped "pedestal" was a fitting reference to the artist's personal history as a third generation metalsmith and to historical metalsmithing in general. This bold, sensitive piece was a pivotal one in an almost overwhelmingly diverse collection. "I like to think of myself as a pretty good problum (sic) solver," Jennings's statement explains ingenuously, "and working with steel in the weights that I do creates a lot of problums."

More experimental materials and techniques were represented by David LaPlantz of Arcata, whose *Cactus Cup,* 1992, was fabricated from painted aluminum, wood and plastic, and Sandra Vandermey of Sylmar, whose battery-operated, 4 x 6″, *Capturing the Neutrino Brooch* hangs on the wall when not being worn. Thomas Brown's *Light Table,* 1992, combined cubist characteristics of two dimensional artwork with the tangible qualities of steel, glass and fluorescent light. The materials themselves seemed the impetus for Harriete Estel Berman's *Patchwork Quilt, Small Pieces of Time* and *Idols of Generations, Illusions to Prophecy.* Judith Hoffman's arguably non-functional *Spectacles for Seeing Stars* metaphorically summed up the new ways these artists and curators were asking their audience to look at metal work.



ABOVE
Colette, *Bull's Eye #1,* 1992
cloisonné enamel, shell, gold, chalcedony, Chinese pearl, umbra sapphire
5 x 6½ x ½″
Courtesy: Mobilia Gallery

The exhibit also included the work of four enamelists, Colette, Deborah Lozier, Marianne Hunter and June Schwarcz, each with a very distinct approach to the medium. Lozier's alluring, poetic pendants look like ancient neckpieces rescued from the jewelry box of Scheherazade. They were suspended in a narrow glass case which allowed the viewer to see both of the elaborately worked sides of each piece. In the same display was *Japanese Palimpsest*, a 24k gold, palladium, anodized niobium, 14k gold and onyx neckpiece by Florence Resnikoff, and two pendant brooches by Judy Bettencourt.

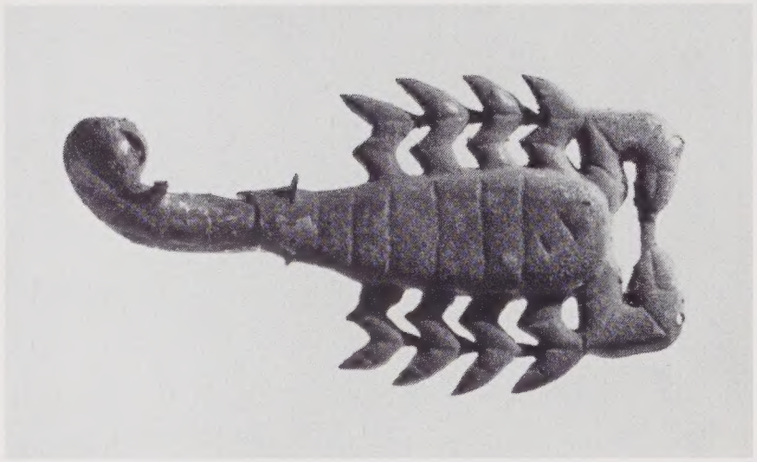
While the Schencks focused almost exclusively on metalsmiths whose work is media-specific – i.e. metal is paramount to what they do – in an effort to recognize the gray area which joins metalsmithing to other art forms, they purposefully included a few artists who might be regarded as sculptors or mixed media specialists first, and metalsmiths second. *Self Portrait C* by Carl Dern and *?Como? Flecha Amarillo* by Lynda Watson-Abbott stretched the definition of "metalsmithing" into the realms of sculpture and mixed media, respectively.

The ninety-three piece exhibition included many of the talented metalsmiths working in California today, although the northern half of the state was highlighted and there were a few unfortunate omissions such as Valerie Mitchell and Mark Bulwinkle. Well-known and respected artists were included along with newcomers; the scope of materials, techniques and artistic objectives was impressively wide; and the exhibit was thoughtfully backed up with three workshops at the Richmond Art Center and a panel discussion at Saint Mary's. It was an industrious effort to educate viewers and fill the void of metalsmithing exhibits.

Mija Riedel is an artist who resides in San Francisco, California

TOP
Deborah Lozier
Dancing Fish on One Foot, 1992
copper, silver, brass, enamel
17½ x 3 x ¾″

ABOVE
Carl Jennings
Seamless Hollow Form, 1990
raised and forged steel
12 x 11 x 12″



Loma Negra: A Peruvian Lord's Tomb

The Metropolitan Museum of Art
New York
October 13, 1992 – July 3, 1993

by Jamie Epstein

More than 1,000 years before Inca craftsmen fanned the fires in their furnaces with lung power instead of bellows, Moche metalsmiths were forcing their breath through similar long blowtubes placed among the burning coals. More than 1,500 years before electricity had been harnessed, the Moche had ingeniously devised a method of electroplating copper so it shone with the brilliance of gold.

As *Loma Negra: A Peruvian Lord's Tomb* clearly shows, the Moche, a coastal people who inhabited a 250-mile stretch of northern Peru from about 100 to 800 A.D. pushed the metallurgy envelope. Expanding on the technique of finessing hammered sheets of gold into finery, the Moche elaborated on the quality and quantity of designs and created objects in low relief and three-dimensional sculpture; their technological repertoire also included lost-wax casting and the alloying of metals. As their aesthetic concerns encompassed the contrast in tonalities among copper, silver, and gold, they deftly joined them into a single ornament by edge welding, crimping, and tabs, then added garnishes of spangly disks that moved freely to capture light and enhance the radiance of the metals.

It was this preoccupation with all things golden that must have inspired the experimentation that led to their amazing feat of gilding copper. According to Heather Lechtman of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, this is how they may have achieved it: Gold was dissolved in a mixture of water and corrosive minerals (salt and potassium nitrate were locally available), to which was added a compound like bicarbonate of soda to create an alkaline pH of about nine. A clean copper object dipped into this solution became both anode and cathode, which supported an electrical current, and when the object was boiled allowed it to be coated with the thinnest layer of gold. The object was then heated to between 500 and 800 degrees Celsius (932 to 1472 degrees Fahrenheit) to permanently bond the gold to the copper.

But this stroke of nearly alchemical mastery would not have been possible had the Moche not already demonstrated their mastery of irrigation. For by coaxing the arid valleys into yielding a bounty of crops, which were augmented with the rich stores from the sea, the Moche flourished. Not unsurprisingly, the tremendous wealth generated by such ingenuity was concentrated in the hands of a few individuals, whose material acquisitiveness supported skilled craftsmen and encouraged innovation. And it is from the nosepieces, earflares, pectoral disks, belt finials, headdresses, insignia, and other regalia accumulated by the elite throughout their life and taken with them to their death that archaeologists have gleaned part of the story of the Moche people.

What we know about the particular lord whose, literally, buried treasure is on display at the Met is that he was the Imelda Marcos of nosepieces. These decorative coverings for the lower half of the face hung from the septum and were worn only by men. The lord governor's oversize collection ranged from naked sheets of usually silver or gilt-copper to those embellished with a simple geometric pattern of raised dots to those that reveal the dominant role animals – from crayfish to iguanas, spiders to bats, owls to foxes – played in Moche mysticism.

In fact, animals held such powerful sway – owls, for example, because of their prowess as hunters – that they graced nearly every ornament. The other most frequently expressed motif was the image of the Decapitator, consistently depicted as a fearsome male figure with feline eyes who seems to be coming right at the viewer holding a tumi, a rounded ceremonial knife, in one hand and a severed human head in the other. If a cartoon bubble were to come out of his mouth, it would simply say, "Aarrgh!!" No one needs a caption to deduce the reverence he inspired or to understand his function in ritual sacrifice.

The details of Moche religion and spirituality remain largely a mystery, but their jewelry provides the outlines of a complex culture animated by a supernatural cross-pollination between man and beast as well as the all too tangible fact of being a warrior people intent on solidifying their earthly presence. And although the luster of more than half of the pieces in this small exhibit is obscured by encrustations of algae-like corrosion, what cannot be obscured is that this ancient people transcended the technology of their time to fabricate sophisticated metal objects that have survived to tell the tale of their virtuosity.

Jamie Epstein is a writer and editor residing in Manhattan.

LEFT TO RIGHT

Scorpion Ornament
Peru (Loma Negra), 3rd century
gilt copper, 5½″ h.

Ornamental mask on stalk
Peru (Loma Negra), 3rd century
gilt copper, 5½″ h.

Fox head finial
Peru (Loma Negra), 3rd century
gilt copper, 5½″ l.

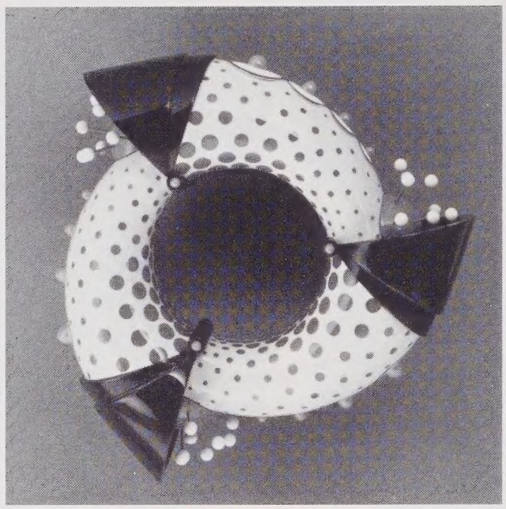
Warrior Figure
Peru (Loma Negra), 3rd century
gilt copper, shell inlay, 4¾″ h.

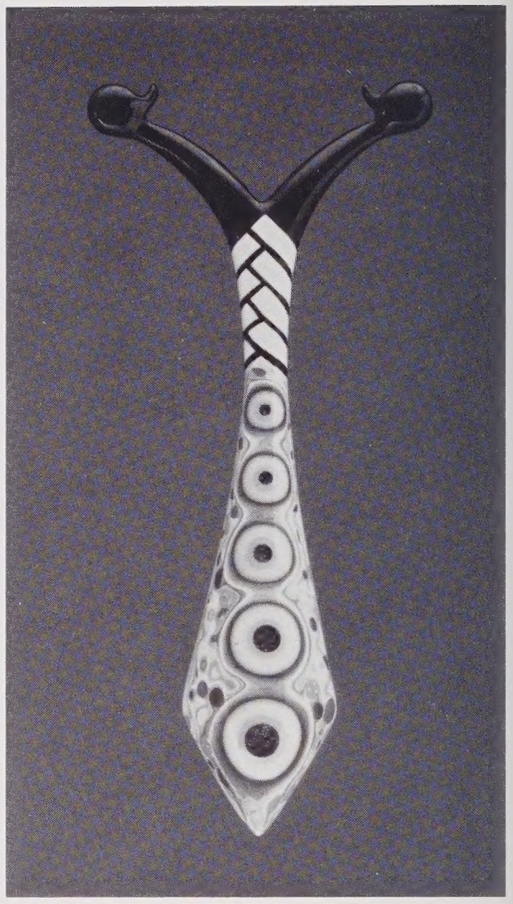
All images courtesy:
The Metropolitan Museum of Art
Gift of Jane Costello Goldberg,
from the collection of Arnold I. Goldberg

RIGHT
Bracelet, 1992
acrylic and polyester
6″ dia. x 2⅜″ d.

FAR RIGHT
Pin, 1990
acrylic and polyester
5.5 x 2.5 x 5″

Photography
by Jack Ramsdale
Courtesy:
Helen Drutt Gallery,
Philadelphia





Peter Chang

Helen Drutt Gallery
Philadelphia PA
November 4 – November 28, 1992

by Bruce Metcalf

There was a time when American metalwork was characterized by excess. Bob Ebendorf used to conduct a surface embellishment workshop, which was a high-energy, rapid-fire presentation of dozens of ways to decorate a surface, and he used to employ about half of those techniques on any one piece of jewelry. Al Paley's stunning pins and neckpieces set a standard of magnum opus metalsmithing for a decade. In the early '70s, the Museum of Contemporary Craft even mounted an exhibition that took baroque excess as its theme, but no more. After several waves of European good taste have rolled ashore, and as a modestly upscale marketplace absorbs the energy of more young jewelers, over-the-top excess has fallen out of fashion. Only a few brave souls – Richard Mawdsley, Judy Onofrio, Marjorie Schick, and Ira Sherman among them – continue to violate the canons of good taste by adding too much of everything.

In this environment of retrenchment and restraint, Peter Chang's marvelously excessive plastic jewelry is truly refreshing. While he makes earrings and pins, his large (6″ to 8″ in diameter) bracelets are by far the strongest work. He starts with a carved core of polystyrene foam, which is encased with many layers of brilliantly colored polyester resin and, occasionally, formed acrylic sheet. In spite of their size, the bracelets are very light and surprisingly wearable, as well as durable. The forms are bulbous, sometimes vaguely mechanical and sometimes insect-like. Colors are usually highly saturated primaries, often played in opposites like purple against yellow, or red and yellow against blue. Primary colors are complemented by occasional pinks and mauves. The net effect is reminiscent of the psychedelic posters of the late '60s. Only flashing neon could create more jangling, high-volume color.

The riotous color is balanced, on consideration, by a series of wide-ranging references. In some areas, Chang applies irregular layers of three to five colors, and then polishes back through them to create dot and wave patterns. This is a version of *"kasane nuri togidashi"*, a polishing-out technique of Japanese lacquer work. The reference grounds the bracelets in a deeply traditional craft form, and contrasts with the obvious influences from kitsch, Pop Art, and psychedelia. In other areas, the plastic is carved into faceted forms that clearly refer to precious cut gemstones. Earlier works were surfaced in patterns of tiny fragments of plastic, recalling Byzantine mosaics.

But the present day remains insistent. Chang's bracelets are faintly absurd, being high-craft objects made from a material we commonly think of as worthless. Of course, plastic jewelry dates back to the Art Deco period, but it was not until artists like Gijs Bakker and Fred Woell started using Plexiglas and found objects in the late 1960s that the tactic had a critical message for the art-jewelry world. For those who wished to reject tradition, the employment of junk materials was a radical position. Nowadays, as the American studio jewelers tend increasingly to use gold and other precious materials, perhaps Chang's reiteration of old insights is still relevant. After all, the community continues to insist that the added value of art-jewelry consists of the artist's intelligence and skill, not the material. Ironically, the considerable labor required to construct the bracelets makes them fairly expensive, and only wealthy collectors can afford them.

As the radical gestures of the '60s and the failed revolution of the "New Jewelry" of the '80s gradually become frozen into history, it is a great pleasure to see a jeweler who trades in excess. Fortunately, the initial shock of seeing these things is not empty. Chang's bracelets are also ruminations on traditions of craftsmanship, on the surprises and absurdities of the modern world, and on some of the ongoing debates in the jewelry community. It is equally pleasurable to see such intelligence compressed into jewelry.

Bruce Metcalf lives, works, and writes in Philadelphia.

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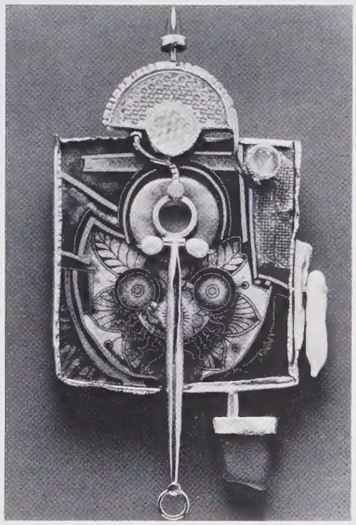

photo: Franklin Parrasch Gallery

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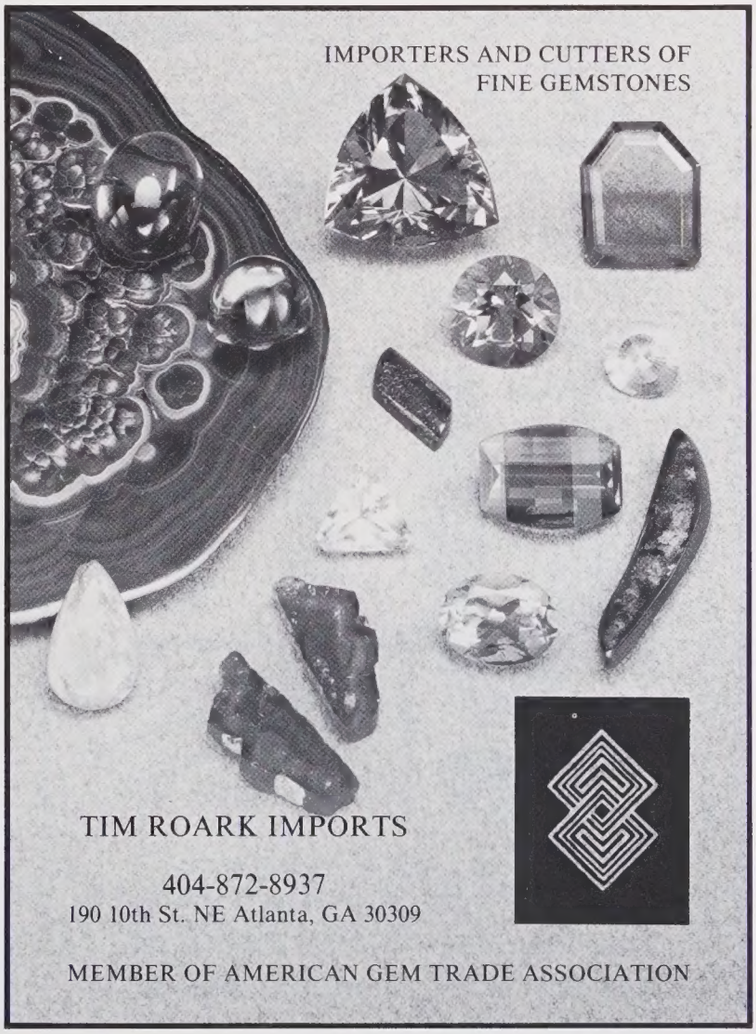

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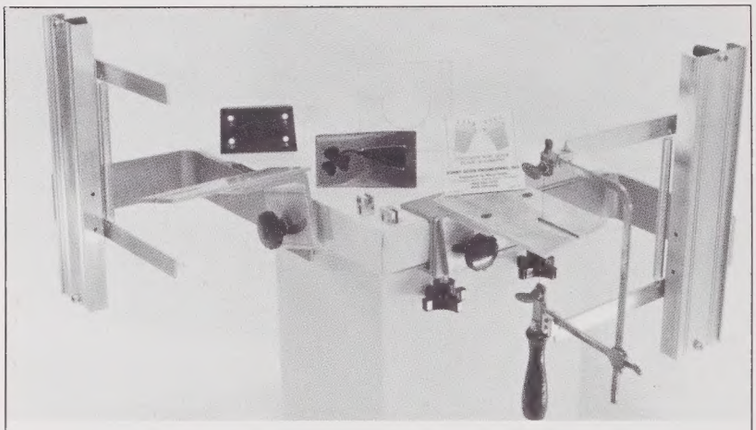

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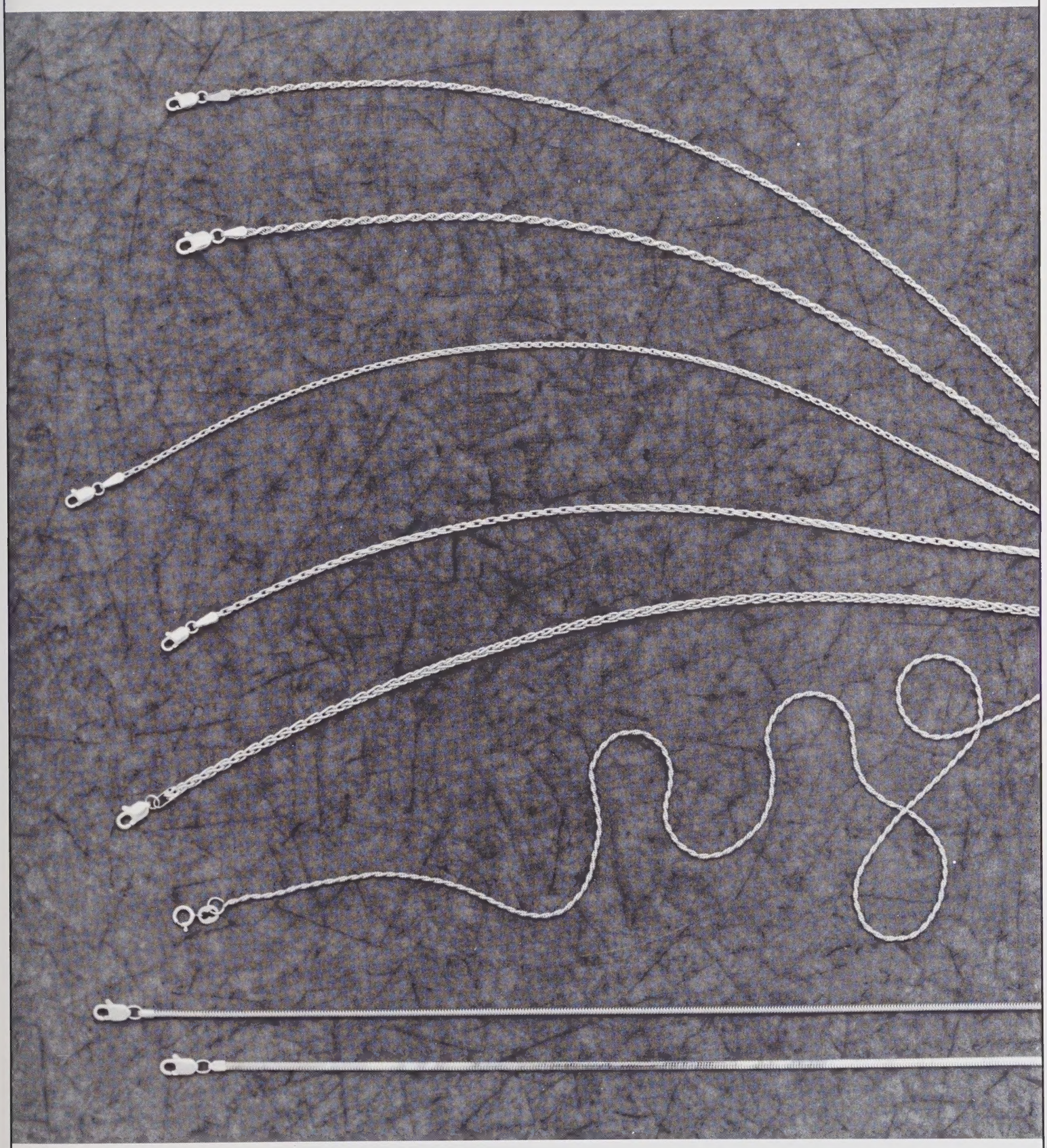

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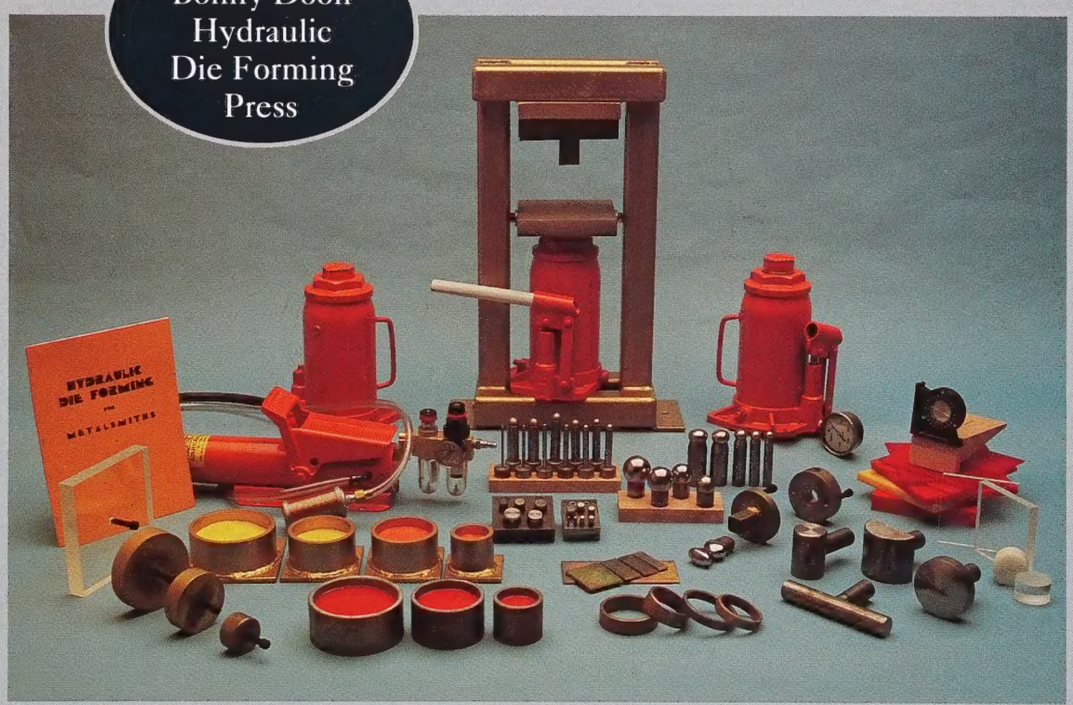

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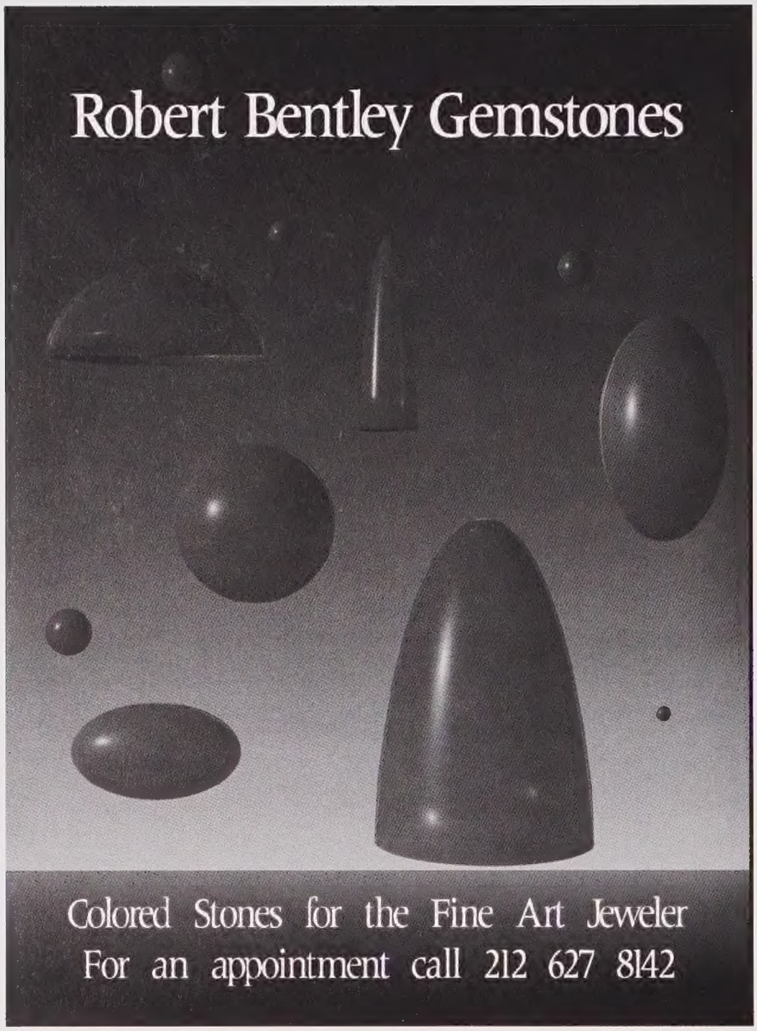

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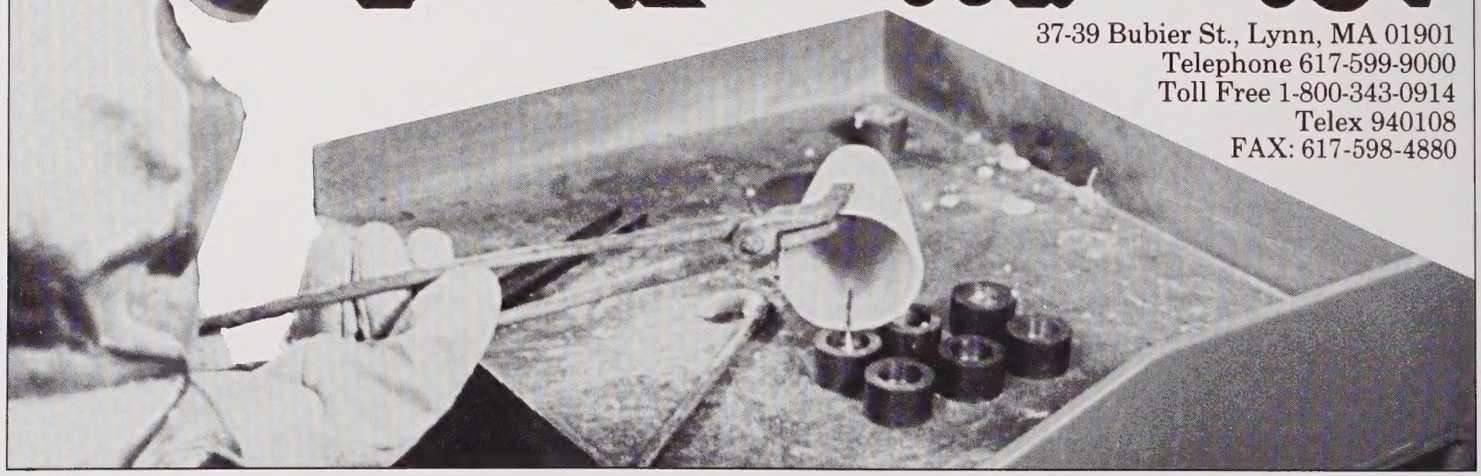

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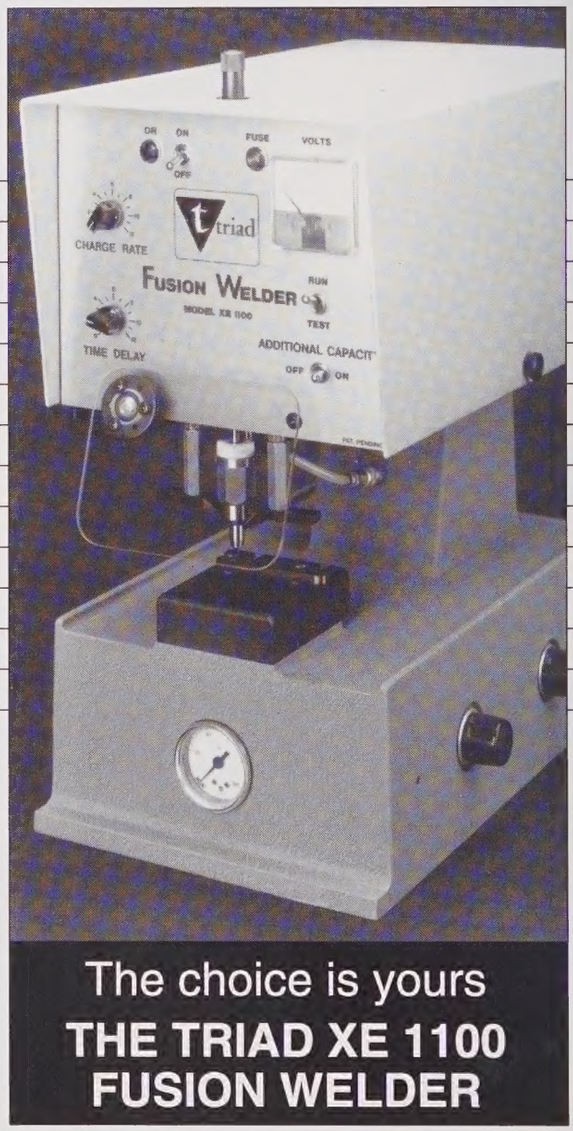

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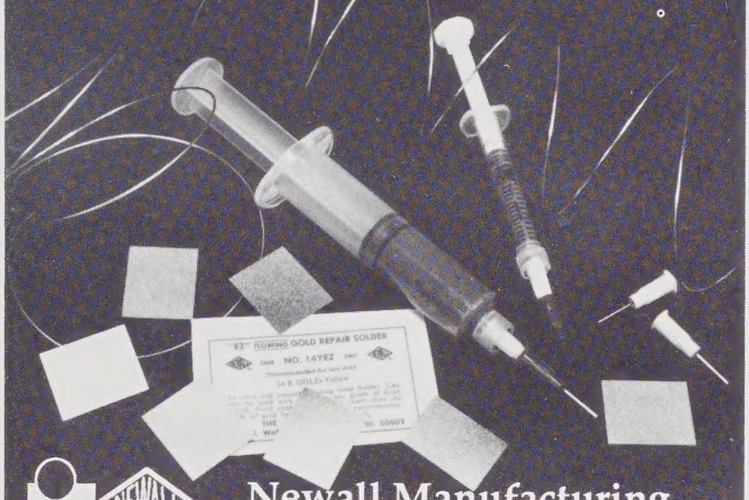

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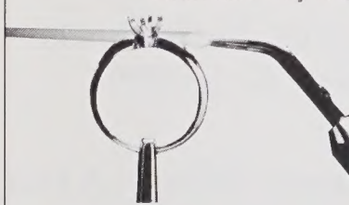

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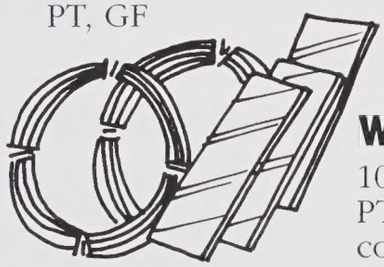

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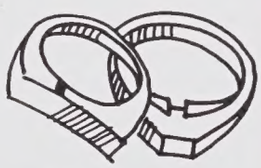

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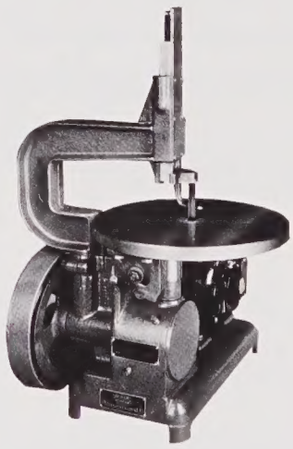

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Other Lectures: *Paulette Werger,* Madison, Wisconsin; *Kathleen Brown,* Kent, Ohio; *Harriete Estel Berman,* San Mateo, California; and Others.

Open Forum with *Frank Lewis,* Editor of *Metalsmith Magazine* and the *Metalsmith* Editorial Advisory Board.

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Conference Fee: $185 for Members; $200 for Non-Members; $125 for Full-time Students with ID. Conference fees must be paid no later than June 10 and covers all conference events. After June 10, a late fee of $25.00 per attendee will be charged. A cancellation fee of $25.00 per attendee will be charged prior to June 10 and $50.00 per attendee after June 10. Tickets for special events may be purchased for Guests. Those who subscribe to *Metalsmith Magazine* only must pay the non-members fee.

Hotel Room Rates: $82.00 for single occupancy per night; $99.00 for double occupancy with a $15.00 charge for each additional person per night. City hotel tax is an additional 10%. Hotel Reservations must be made by June 10 and secured with a deposit of credit card. After this date, room reservations are accepted on a space- and rate-available basis.

All members of the Society of North American Goldsmiths will receive a registration brochure shortly. Others may request the brochure by writing SNAG '93, PO Box 404, Oxford, Ohio 45056.

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The Society of North American Goldsmiths (SNAG) was formed in 1970 to promote contemporary metalwork and jewelry. Through its publications, services and advocacy, SNAG serves the fine art and jewelry communities. SNAG's publications and conferences provide technical information and critical insight to practitioners and teachers of metalwork. Professional metalsmiths, students, collectors, gallery owners and enthusiasts make up the dynamic mix of the Society.

Services

The Society's annual conference provides a forum for the exchange of many points of view. Speakers of national recognition offer stimulating discourse on a range of topics. Members of the Society attend the conference at reduced rates.

The Society sponsors important exhibitions of contemporary metalwork. Past SNAG shows have been mounted at the Renwick Gallery, the St. Paul Museum of Art and several galleries in New York City. These exhibitions are usually restricted to members only.

The Society maintains an audio-visual library, which contains the portfolios of distinguished members and other notable metalsmiths. Members can rent slides, films and videotapes at a nominal cost.

The Society operates a discount book service, through which important texts on all aspects of the field can be ordered at a reduced price.

Publications

Metalsmith is the only magazine in America devoted solely to the metal arts. Please see the reverse side of this page for a detailed description of this exciting magazine. Membership in the Society includes a subscription to *Metalsmith*.

The *SNAG Newsletter* is published bimonthly and is available to members only. It features timely information on exhibitions, work-shops, conferences and job opportunities throughout North America.

Membership Categories

The Society offers several types of memberships, each tailored to a specific level of involvement in the field of contemporary metalsmithing.

- *General Membership* ($45) is open to everyone and includes subscriptions to *Metalsmith* and the *SNAG Newsletter*, reduced conference fees, access to all of SNAG's services and full voting privileges.
- *Student Membership* ($35) is offered at a reduced rate to any full-time student attending an accredited educational institution. This membership offers all the advantages of a *general membership* but does not carry voting privileges. Please send a copy of your student ID with membership application.
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Checks (drawn on US banks) should be made payable to SNAG, in U.S. dollars only. Contributions are deductible within legal limits for tax purposes. Allow eight to ten weeks to receive your first copy of *Metalsmith*.

P R O F I F O R M 200 & 320

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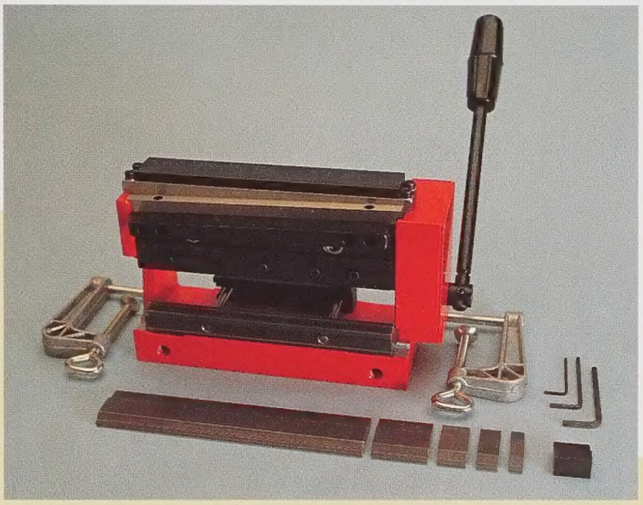

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with hole punches
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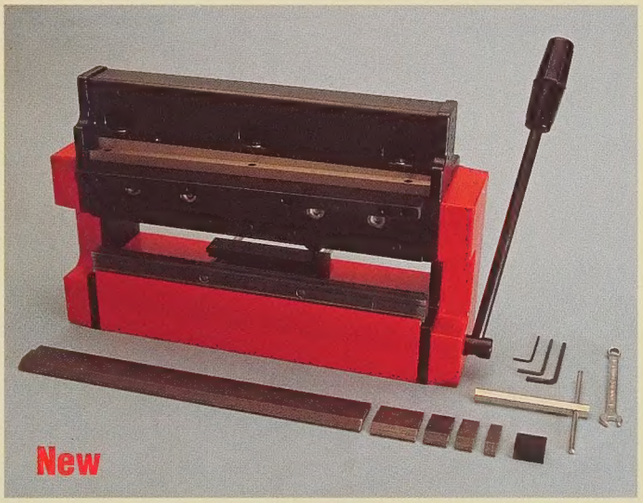

Profiform 320

Basic unit
Part No. 153.428
Price $1,695.00

Complete unit
with hole punches
(save $310.00)
Part No. 153.426
Price $2,650.00

Specifications	Model 200	Model 320
Bending & cutting capacity: Usable width	7 7/8" (200 mm)	12 7/16" (320 mm)
Max. material thickness: Gold, silver, brass, copper	0.040" (1.0 mm)	0.040" (1.0 mm)
Aluminum plate	0.060" (1.5 mm)	0.060" (1.5 mm)
Dimensions:	3"d x 7"h x 10"w	5"d x 10"h x 17"w
Shipping weight:	18 lbs.	40 lbs

Hole Punches

Profile	Size (mm)	Part No.	Price
○	3.0	153.403	$75.00
○	4.0	153.404	$75.00
○	5.0	153.405	$75.00
○	6.0	153.406	$75.00
○	8.0	153.408	$75.00
○	10.0	153.410	$75.00
□	4x4	153.414	$95.00
□	6x6	153.416	$95.00
□	8x8	153.418	$95.00
□	10x10	153.420	$95.00
□	12x12	153.422	$95.00
□	4x20	153.424	$95.00

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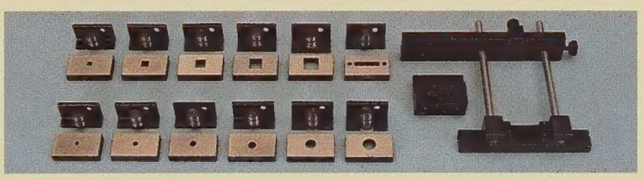

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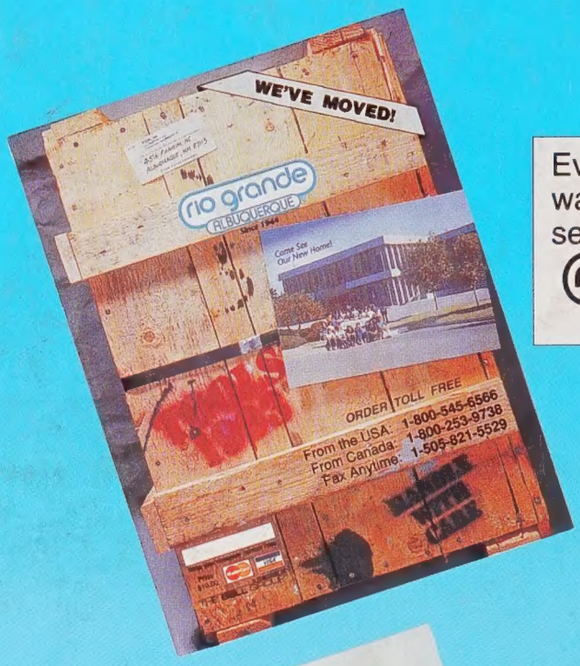

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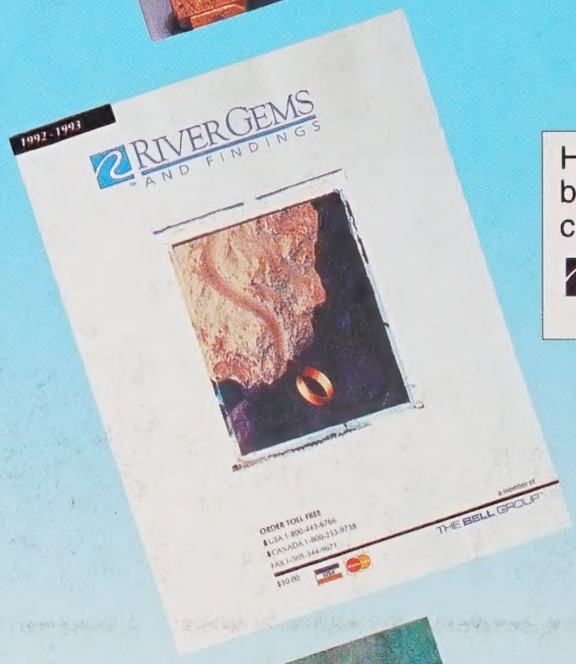

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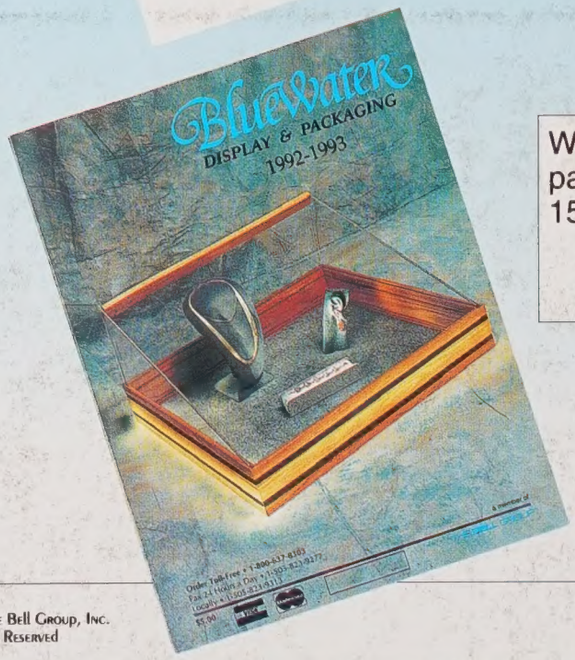

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